

THE ETHICAL FRAMEWORK THAT
INFORMS MILITARY MEMBERS
OF AFRICAN DESCENT

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A FINAL DOCUMENT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DAYTON, OHIO
December, 2001

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ABSTRACT

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This project was designed to determine whether military personnel of African descent were cognizant of being exposed to racism in the Air Force and if so did they believe there were barriers to racism being addressed. A questionnaire was administered at seminars and personal interviews were conducted with personnel of African heritage. It was discovered that the majority had experienced racism and felt there were barriers that precluded racism from being addressed. This researcher concluded that an effective model ministry could be developed from the data collected that would assist in transcending the barriers that preclude racism from being addressed.

DEDICATION

This work is warmly dedicated to my mother whose overt actions, which were informed by the spiritually based ethical framework of her ancestors, influenced me more than I was aware. This work is also dedicated to the faith community of the Trinity Baptist Church, Sumter, South Carolina, which was located on West Liberty Street during my youth. God used them, my Sunday School teachers especially, to shape me for the divine work that lies ahead.

INTRODUCTION

America has never had a race problem, contrary to the hundreds of publications that assert a race problem has existed in this country since the arrival of White Europeans and the forced appearance of Africans.

Books have been written on such as *The Color Problem In Early National America As Viewed By John Adams, Jefferson And Jackson*.¹ The only difficulty with such books is that they are misleading. Color was not a major problem the Colonists or early national leaders had to confront. Neither was color the primary motivating factor that prompted the Colonists to enslave Africans.

In contemporary America, there is no race problem. A Presidential Commission on Race and local communities establishing Dialogues on Race are useless undertakings because neither race nor color is the real issue in America.

If America does not have a race problem, then what is the issue? The issue is racism. Racism is a practice established by human beings and is out of harmony with God's will. Racism is indicative of the fact that America has a spiritual problem.

Racism is the result of a spiritual crisis, not political or educational shortcomings. Commissions and community task forces comprised of citizens of various backgrounds is not an acceptable plan of attack against racism. Racism is

¹ Frederick M. Binder, *The Color Problem In Early National America As Viewed By John Adams, Jefferson And Jackson* (Paris, France: Mouton, 1968).

demonic behavior. At the core, racism reflects a problem for which the resolution rests in the spiritual realm.

Racism is a phenomenon that has an explainable beginning and can be traced directly to its author. The racial group in America that has become so powerful and dominant that it is able to control another group and enforce the controlling group's pre-conceived biases about the other group is White America.

The origin of racism rests with White America. White America is the only racial group in the United States has the power to impose its will upon and exploit another racial group, misusing its power. White America is the only racial group has the power to pretend that racism does not exist, and insist that racist practices are merely erroneous perceptions on the part of the people who make the claim. Since White America is the only racial group that possesses the degree of power and dominance required to control another group and to enforce its biases about the other group, only White America can be racist. People of African heritage in the United States by definition cannot be racist because they do not possess the power and dominance necessary to enforce their biases about White people.²

Racism, as Joseph Barndt correctly asserts, is a White problem. People of African descent are affected by racism, but racism is a crisis that belongs to White America. The nation and sincere leaders have been trying to solve the problem, but with the best intentions have consistently aimed in the wrong direction. Practically all of the nation's social and political initiatives for solving the so call race problem

² Joseph Barndt, *Dismantling Racism: The Continuing Challenge to White America* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1991), 34-35.

have attempted to change the victims of racism and the conditions within their communities. This backward blundering approach has left the real issue unaddressed.³

Racism is a practice and not a thought or concept. Joseph Barndt, in my opinion, provides the best definition of racism:

Everyone is prejudiced, but not everyone is racist. To be prejudiced means to have opinions without knowing the facts and to hold onto those opinions without knowing the facts, even after contrary facts are known. To be racially prejudiced means to have distorted opinions about people of other races. Racism goes beyond prejudice. It is backed up by power. Racism is the power to enforce one's prejudices. More simply stated, racism is prejudice plus power....Racial prejudice is transformed into racism when one racial group becomes so powerful and dominant that it is able to control another group and to enforce the controlling group's biases.⁴

Racism arrogates unto itself the element of power and utilizes it for the purpose of subjugating those who are different. Apart from the element of power, racism is reduced to bigotry. Power is crucial for the creation, perpetuation, and maintenance of racism within a given society.⁵

Racism is different from discrimination. Anyone can be discriminated against on the basis of age, sex, origin and or religion. White people can experience discrimination, as well as bigotry. However, White people cannot be exposed to racism in America.

There is a group in the United States whose *raison d'être* is to labor toward

³ Ibid., 37.

⁴ Ibid., 28-29.

⁵ Susan E. Davies and Sister Paul Teresa Hennessee, *Ending Racism In The Church*, Leonard Lovett, *Color Lines and the Religion of Racism* (Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press, 1998), 24.

eradicating racism by focusing all their energy in the proper theater of war. The group's approach is called Reframing the Dialogue on Racism and the nature of the dialogue is considered paramount.

Reframing the Dialogue on Racism is an approach to investigating new, more meaningful and viable ways to reframe dialogues about racism. Traditionally, according to Dr. Samuel Mann who is a prime mover in the group, the need for survival has forced people of African heritage to the table to dialogue and search for solutions. White Americans have come to the table from a position of power and guilt. Both parties approach the task of dialoguing about racism from a negative, unsophisticated and insincere posture. Regardless of the educational attainments, social or financial status represented at the table, no impacting permanent sound solutions or wholesome initiatives can emerge from this cooperate effort due to the forces that drive each party to the table.⁶

Wherever there is oppression and the oppressed fail to completely capitulate to the oppressor it is because two ethical frameworks exist in that society. There is the ethical framework of the oppressor and the ethical framework of the oppressed. Whether the oppressor or the oppressed, each community's ethical framework draws its nourishment from a primary source. That foundational source is either spiritual or non-spiritual.

A people or society's racial views are an extension of their ethical framework, which informs their decision making process. A people or society's ethical

⁶ The Reframing The Dialogue On Racism is the name of a national group founded in 1997, with the initial meeting at Saint Paul School of Theology, Kansas City, Missouri. Dr. Samuel Mann and Reverend John Mandez organized the event.

framework is an extension of their foundational source, which is either a spiritual base or a non-spiritual base. Black America and White America are governed and shaped by two distinct opposing ethical frameworks, which emerge from two distinct bases or foundations.

Robert B. Ashmore notes that the etymological meaning of ethics is customs or usages, coming from the Greek word *ethos*. Similarly, the word morals is derived from the Latin *mores*, having the same meaning.⁷

Paul Taylor says that morality is a set of social rules and standards that guide the conduct of people in a culture. It is one aspect of a culture's entire way of life, and has a special importance to everyone who has been brought up within the framework of that way of life.⁸

In view of Taylor's definition, the assertion that people of African heritage in the United States and White people in this country have different ethical frameworks that have distinctive importance to everyone who has been brought up within the framework of that way of life and informs their decision making process is validated.

A primary distinction between the ethical frameworks of Black America and White America is that one is relational or spiritually based and the other is non-relational or non-spiritually based.

⁷ Robert B. Ashmore, *Building A Moral System* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1987), 2.

⁸ Paul W. Taylor, editor, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, 3rd edition (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1978), 6.

An ethical framework that is relational is spiritually based, and contains and is guided by eternal concepts such as love, justice, mercy, compassion and faith, which are manifested daily in the lives of the people whose decision making process is informed by this framework.

An ethical framework that is non-relational is non-spiritually based and does not display daily eternal concepts such as love, justice, mercy, compassion and faith.

An ethical framework cannot be relational and non-spiritually based. Neither can an ethical framework be spiritually based and non—relational. If an ethical framework is either spiritually based, it is relational. If an ethical framework is non-spiritually based, it non-relational.

The twentieth century theologian, Dr. Howard Thurman, who was two generations removed from slavery and nurtured by his ex-slave grandmother, lived through, reflected on and wrote about the effects of segregation in America.

Thurman noted that White people fashioned segregation and codified laws to assist them in governing the movement and development of people of African descent. There was some contact between the two races, but it was contact without fellowship. The experience was non-relational. A non-relational association, as was segregation, is informed by an I - It relationship.

Contact without fellowship is contact that is devoid of any of the primary overtures of warmth and fellow-feeling and genuineness. Thurman pointed out that it is easy for people to have fellowship on their own terms and repudiate it if those terms are not acceptable. It was this kind of fellowship that existed in the South between White people and the population of African heritage during the era of

segregation. As long as the descendants of the slaver community were called John or Mary and accepted the profoundly humiliating position of an inferior status, fellowship was possible. Great sacrifices were even made for such people, and all the weight of position and power were at the disposal of the weaker. It was precisely because of this false basis of fellowship often found in that section of the country where there was the greatest contact between people of African heritage and White people that there was the least real fellowship.

Contacts without fellowship tend to express themselves in the kind of understanding that is strikingly unsympathetic, as a non-spiritually based ethical framework is indifferent and insensitive. There is understanding of a kind, but it is without the healing and reinforcement of personality. It is a grievous blunder to assume that understanding is always sympathetic. Often the phrase 'I understand' is used to mean something kindly, warm, and gracious. But there is an understanding that is hard, cold, minute, and deadly. It is the kind of understanding that one gives to the enemy, or that is derived from an accurate knowledge of another's power to injure. Understanding that is not the outgrowth of an essential fellow-feeling is likely to be unsympathetic.

Unsympathetic understanding is the characteristic attitude governing the relation between the weak and the strong. All kinds of first aid may be rendered to the weak; they may be protected so long as there is the abject acknowledgment of their utter dependence upon the strong. When White Southerners said during the era of segregation of people of African descent 'I understand them', what was meant was that White people had knowledge of people of African descent within the limitations

of the boundaries they (White people) had established. The kind of people of African heritage, or Negroes as they were called during segregation, White people understood had no existence except in their (White people) own minds.⁹

A relational ethical framework is informed by an I and Thou relationship. It has the primary overtures of warmth and fellow-feeling and genuineness.

Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher, examined the I - Thou relationship verses the I - It relationship among human beings and elevated the concept to premiere prominence.

Buber says that to human beings the world is twofold, in accordance with their twofold attitude. The attitude of humanity is twofold, in accordance with the twofold nature of the primary words which they speak. These primary words are not isolated words, but combined words. The one primary word is the combination I-Thou. The other primary word is the combination I-It. The I of the primary word I-Thou is a different I from that of the primary word I-It.

Primary words do not signify things, but they intimate relations. The primary word I-Thou can only be spoken with the whole being. The primary word I-It can never be spoken with the whole being. When a person says I, the individual is referring to one or other of these.

When Thou is spoken, the speaker has no thing for an object. For where there is a thing there is another thing. Every It is bounded by others. It exists only through

⁹ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1996), 75-77.

being bounded by others. But when Thou is spoken, there is no thing. Thou has no bounds. The primary word I-Thou establishes the world of relation.¹⁰

The relation to the Thou is direct. No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy schemes intervene between I and Thou. Every means is an obstacle. Only when every means has collapsed does the meeting come about. In face of the directness of the relation everything indirect becomes irrelevant.¹¹

The eternal concept of love is between I and Thou. Love is responsibility of an I for a Thou.¹²

“Just as the melody is not made up of notes nor the verse of words nor the statue of lines, but they must be tugged and dragged till their unity has been scattered into these many pieces, so with the man to whom I say Thou. I can take out from him the color of his hair, or of his speech, or of his goodness. I must continually do this. But each time I do it he ceases to be Thou”.¹³

The workings of a relational or non-relational ethical framework can manifest itself in all vocations. Educators have alluded to the relational and non-relational concept, though not approaching the issue from a theological perspective. Joe L. Kincheloe and Shirley R. Steinberg writes that rationalistic modernist Whiteness is shaped and confirmed by its close association with science. As a scientific construct, Whiteness privileges mind over body; intellectual over experiential ways of knowing;

¹⁰ Martin Buber, *I And Thou*, Ronald Gregor Smith, trans. (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1947), 3-5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

¹² *Ibid.*, 15.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

and mental abstractions over passion, bodily sensations, and tactile understanding. In the study of multicultural education, such epistemological tendencies take on dramatic importance. In educators' efforts to understand the forces that drive the curriculum and the purposes of Western education, modernist Whiteness is a central player. The insight it provides into intelligence, the social construction of schooling, and the disciplines of psychology and educational psychology in particular opens a gateway into White consciousness and its reactions to the world around it.¹⁴

The earliest writers and thinkers appear to have embraced the idea that ethical frameworks were either relational or non-relational. Friendship between people is relational and entails fellowship.

Speaking of this relational association, Aristotle said that friendship seems to be the bond that holds communities together.¹⁵ He further asserts that friendship and justice seem to be exhibited in the same sphere of conduct and between the same persons because in every community there is supposed to be some kind of justice and also some friendly feeling. The proverb 'friends have all things in common' is quite right, because friendship is based on community.¹⁶

Only in a relational environment can justice and friendship exist. True community implies a relational foundation, an I-Thou relationship.

¹⁴ Joe L. Kincheloe, Shirley R. Steinberg, Nelson M. Rodriguez, and Ronald E. Chennault, eds., *White Reign* (New York, New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1998), 5-6.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Ethics*, J. A. K. Thomson, trans. (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 258.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 273.

From a theological and philosophical perspective, it is fair to assert that a people or society's ethical framework is either spiritually based or non-spiritually based. The ethical framework that shapes and informs a society and its members in the decision making process is indicative of whether the ethical framework is spiritually based (relational) or non-spiritually based (non-relational).

Chapter one of this work will highlight this writer's childhood years, the spiritual foundation to which he was introduced and that shaped the ethical framework of his community. This writer's gradual acquaintance with racism will also be discussed. The context in which this researcher is engaged in ministry will be discussed and a problem within the context that has attracted my attention.

Chapter two will focus on the required behavior for researchers, scholars, concerned individuals, and thinkers from various disciplines who are seriously interested in reframing the dialogue on racism. The required behavior is two fold. First, transformative learning is obligatory in order for reframing the dialogue on racism to be effective. Secondly, intentionally avoiding traditional pitfalls that have caused researchers and historians to stumble is mandatory if research and findings in the area of reframing the dialogue on racism are to be meaningful and substantive.

Chapter three will examine from a theoretical position the ethical frameworks that inform the decision making process of White America and Black America, asserting that the former is non-spiritually based or non-relational and the latter is spiritually based or relational.

Chapter four will highlight the differences between qualitative and quantitative research, pointing out the advantages of qualitative research, as it is the method employed by this researcher.

Chapter five contains the data findings from the research conducted in my context. A model of ministry for transcending barriers that preclude racism from being satisfactorily addressed in this context has been developed and outlined.

Chapter six is a summary of the findings and the researcher's assessment of how racism can be effectively addressed in the context where the research was conducted.

CHAPTER ONE

SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Spiritual Development

In this section, I will discuss some of the factors that shaped my development as a child from a spiritual and social perspective. The experiences are unique to my life and the writer seeks no agreement or approval from readers.

I was reared in what sociologists define as an extended family. We saw ourselves as a family, making no distinction between immediate and extended. My maternal grandmother and grandfather, my mother and father, my sister, Williet, my brother, Randall, and I lived in the same house.

The earliest recollection I have about an impression being made upon me occurred one Sunday morning when I was around five years of age. We were in the primary Sunday School Class at Trinity Baptist Church on West Liberty Street, Sumter, South Carolina. Reverend H. H. Harvin was the pastor. This was not my first time at Sunday School, but on this particular Sunday something registered with me.

The Sunday School teacher was Mrs. Lizzie Brown. She probably never matriculated beyond elementary school. With the command of the English language she possessed, Mrs. Brown told the boys and girls about a man named Jesus, who lived a long time ago. She said He loved everybody, and one day some people killed

Him for no justifiable reason. Mrs. Brown shared with us how we had to love everybody just as Jesus did. My sister, brother and I went to Sunday School regularly. No matter what the lesson was about some how Mrs. Lizzie Brown always concluded the class telling us about Jesus and how He loved everyone. I found the story to be wonderfully appealing at that young age, though I did not fully comprehend the breath and depth of the account.

The theme of love was consistent throughout my Sunday School years, which lasted until I was a teenager. Mrs. Lizzie Brown, Mrs. Inez Bogger, Mrs. Annie Bell Evans, Mrs. Butchie Harvin Swinton, Mrs. Mary Edith Brand, and Mrs. Honey Phillips highlighted this theme consistently as they elucidated as best they could their understanding of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

The first individual to make an impression upon me outside of my immediate family was the pastor of Trinity Baptist Church at the time. His name was Reverend H. H. Harvin. Reverend Harvin stopped by our house one morning to get some money from my grandmother, who was a member of the missionary society at Trinity Baptist Church. It was during the summer. He came by on a Monday morning. My grandmother was washing clothes on the back porch. Monday was washday. I ran to tell her about the guest. When I mentioned that Reverend Harvin was coming around the house to the back porch, she quickly turned the washing machine off, untied her apron and put it aside, quickly brushed herself off, and stood to welcome the pastor. This was the first and only time I recall seeing my grandmother respond in this manner to anyone. I concluded from her reaction that she had an out of the ordinary respect for the preacher.

I overheard the old preacher explain that two or three elderly members needed medicine, which they did not have enough money to purchase. The church's missionary society was asked to make up the difference. My grandmother gave him the money from the missionary fund she kept. The pastor was to drive to town, pick up the medicine, and deliver it to the sick members.

As a boy, I was very moved by Reverend Harvin's actions and the manner in which he commanded situations. I could tell from the Sunday experiences that the congregation, comprised of rural dwellers, really loved and admired their pastor.

The congregation at Trinity Baptist Church was comprised of fundamental Christians, according to contemporary categorizations. It was believed that nothing should be in a worshippers mouth while in church service, as the object would distract the person from having his or her full attention on God. One Sunday some of the youths were chewing gum during the worship service. The pastor, Reverend L. W. Walker, Sr., who succeeded Reverend Harvin upon his death, interrupted the worship service. He had the ushers to go to every youth that was chewing and collect each wad of gum. I remember an adult usher coming to the pew where I was sitting and an open palm waiting for my piece of gum.

My mother was an elementary school teacher and was hired to teach in Loris, South Carolina, ninety-five miles from Sumter. My sister and I accompanied her to Loris. One Sunday morning in Loris a teenage boy in the neighborhood took my sister, Williet, and I to Sunday School. I heard the sound of the church bell as we started walking toward the church. As we approached the church, I saw an old man of African heritage standing at the door pulling a thick brown rope. His body

extended and lowered itself as he pulled and released the cord and the bell rang.

Before entering the church, I stood watching the old man. He indicated that it was okay for me to grab hold of the thick rope and help him. I held the cord, but he did the pulling. The thick brown rope was larger than my hands. The sound of the bell was loud and clear, as we stood underneath it. I had been taught there was a Being identified as God who created the world and the people in it. I thought to myself as I heard the bell on succeeding Sundays that this God must be an awesome Being if the ringing of the bell at a certain hour was sufficient to alert the members of the community to assemble at His house.

Gradual Acquaintance With Racism

I do not recall seeing many White people during my childhood. My grandmother washed clothes for three White families in town. The man of each household transported a basket of dirty laundry to our house each Monday morning and in exchange picked up a basket of clean clothes. The communities in Sumter, South Carolina were segregated. White people drove along the road in front of our house and I saw them passing. A neighbor drove my grandmother to the grocery store on Friday mornings shortly before noon. Sometimes I went with her. At the Winn Dixie I saw White people. The three White men mentioned earlier who came to our side of town each Monday morning were the only White people I saw with any regularity during my first five years of life.

The first time I saw a large group of White people and their presence struck me as somewhat unusual occurred when I was six or seven years old. My sister and I rode to school with mother. One morning when I was in the second or third grade,

(1962/1963) we left home for school and it was not our usual time. I do not remember whether it was earlier than normal or later. However, I do recall certain things along the way catching my attention for the first time. I saw a group of about eight to twelve White children huddled along the road. I had never seen them there. Their book bags were on the ground and some were holding books in their hands. They were talking and laughing as we passed. I asked aloud:

“Where are they going.”

“To school,” my mother said.

“What school do they go to?” I asked curiously.

She told me where they attended.

As time elapsed, I do not remember having any increased interaction with White people. Seeing them was always a passing event. However, I was becoming more observant of situational dynamics. I began to notice the dynamics of encounters between people of African descent and White people.

When I was in the second or third grade, I was accidentally struck in the left eye one morning at school. As the day went by my eye began to swell immensely. In the early afternoon, my mother took me out of school and drove me to the local doctor’s office in Loris. We went inside and sat down in the waiting room. Several White adult patients were present. I do not recall seeing any other people of African descent. A White receptionist wearing the tradition white medical attire came got my mother. A few moments thereafter I heard my mother say:

“Just give me cloth and some ice.” These items were given to her. As we were exiting the doctor’s office, I recall my mother saying while walking up the

sidewalk: "I am not going around to the back and come in through the backdoor." If my memory serves me correctly, I think she added: "I let him go blind first."

In the car, mother wrapped the ice in the cloth the receptionist had given her, gave it to me and said:

"Hold this over your eye."

We left Loris and headed to Sumter, which was ninety-eight miles away. Occasionally mother asked me to remove the homemade icepack so she could see my swollen eye.

My maternal grandmother, who was born around 1885 in Darlington County, South Carolina, had a brother who still lived in Darlington. His name was Bennie Brown, Sr. We rode to Darlington to visit him three or four times a year. This outing was always a Saturday trip. My grandmother and her brother, Bennie, were the only two surviving children of several brothers and sisters born during the second half of the nineteenth century.

One Saturday afternoon before leaving Uncle Bennie's house, I vaguely heard the adults in the family talking. My grandmother and mother were cautioned to be careful on the way back to Sumter and consider taking an alternate route. We left Uncle Bennie's house and after riding to about twenty minutes mother began to reduce her speed. As we coasted along, I began to see cars parked on the side of the road. There were, what appeared to be, hundreds of White people in a field. This was the largest gathering of White people I had ever seen at any one time. The closer we got to the setting the more I was able to distinguish. I could not see the faces of some of the people along the side of the road, but could tell from the frames of their

bodies that they were men. A person was changing a tire on a car parked on the side of the road. I could tell from the shoes that it was a male. The reason I could not see some of their faces or bodies was because the men had white cloth hoods over their faces and long white attire covering their bodies. They wore white hats that looked like an up side down cone. The White man changing the tire did not have a hood over his face, but was adorned in the costume looking outfit. Most of the White people in the open field were dressed in regular everyday attire.

While riding past the crowd in the open field, I saw a gigantic wooden cross. It was the largest cross I had ever seen. To my amazement, it was burning. The blaze had the shape of the cross. I called up all that I could remember about the Bible and Jesus, but was unable to recall anyone telling a story about the cross and saying it burned. I made the comment, as we rode along slowly:

“Look, that cross is on fire.”

My mother nor grandmother responded. I knew what the cross represented to me. I got a bad feeling about the people in the field. I knew right away that what that burning cross meant to the people in that field and what the cross to which I had been introduced meant to me were worlds apart.

We moved forward and left the field of White people with the large burning cross behind. Mother had only driven a short distance when something happened. A rock was thrown at our car. It came from the direction of a house off the road. My mother turned down a dirt road and started driving toward the old dilapidated wood frame house. Some White people came out on the porch of the old ragged tin-top house. My mother got out of the car and walked toward the house. I do not

remember what was said between the parties. My mother said what was on her mind, returned to the car and drove on to Sumter. I was about eight years old at this time.

One day, when I was about ten years old, my mother took me to town to get a pair of shoes. I looked at the shoes on display and pointed out the pair that appealed to me. A White man who appeared to be in his late forties or early fifties asked if he could help us. Mother told him we wanted to purchase a pair of shoes. The man measured my foot and said he was going in the stock room to get the shoes. A few moments after the man left my mother directed me to put my shoes on. I obeyed, thinking she had another idea and we were going to another store. As we were walking out of the door of Brody Department Store, the man who had waited on me appeared out of nowhere. My mother was about to push the door open to walk out when he said something to her. He was almost whispering. I could not hear what he said, but heard what mother said to him. She put me behind her back and said to the man:

“No, you need to learn some manners. We were here first. You left us and went to wait on them,” meaning a White family.

The man started saying something in his whispering voice again, but mother just led me on out of the store. I had an idea of what transpired in the store. At home I overheard her telling family members what happened:

“One of the Brody brothers was waiting on us. A White family came in. He left us and went to help them. I told Wally to put his shoes on. As we were walking out of the store, he runs over to me and says: ‘Ma’am, you should learn some manners.’ I said, ‘No, I think you are the one who needs to learn some manners. We

were here first. You left us and went to wait on them.” Mother said a few more things that failed to register with me and there was some dialogue among the adults. However, she regained my attention when saying:

“I wish he had put his hands on me. I was going to cut him up one side and down the other.”

In tenth grade, I went to an integrated high school. At the beginning of the school year a strange series of events transpired on the school bus I rode. High school students drove the buses and were paid for their service. The bus driver on our route was a White high school senior. All of the high school students of African heritage in my neighborhood caught the bus at the same location. The students in my neighborhood were picked up first the initial week of school. We got on the bus each morning and sat here and there. When picking up students in the White neighborhoods, they searched for vacant seats as they boarded the bus. There were more White students, than students of African descent who rode the bus, and it appeared that the White students preferred to sit on top of each other rather than by any of us. The students of African heritage were not moved by the behavior of the White students. We never discussed their behavior among ourselves.

The following Monday morning when the bus arrived to pick us up the driver said:

“Each morning we will fill the bus up beginning from the back.”

Since the students in my neighborhood were picked up first and the riders were to fill the seats beginning at the rear, all of the students of African heritage would be in the back of the bus. When the bus arrived in the White community to

pick those students us, they sat at the front of the bus. It was apparent to me that the White families had devised the scheme and pressured the bus driver to implement it.

There was a girl from our neighborhood named Ruby Mae Wilson who was a senior. She was also the oldest student among us. One or two mornings, after it was announced that students would fill the seats starting from the rear, Ruby said to us:

“I have a petition and I want all of you to sign it.” There were eight or ten riders. Ruby read the petition to us that she had drafted on notebook paper. Every student read and signed it. When the bus arrived, Ruby explained to Robert that we were not going to begin filling up the bus from the back. He said it was the policy. I remember him saying something to the effect:

“I am a Christian and I really want this thing to work.”

Robert and Ruby reached an agreement to stay the course to the end of the week. I surmised that Robert had to talk the situation over with the White students and their families who were pressuring him.

One morning about the third week of school the bus was extremely late. After waiting for about fifteen minutes beyond the normal pick up time, we became concerned. We began talking among ourselves about whether we should start walking to school. We were not late, but all of us were getting uneasy. The bus came into view. It was coming from a different direction. I wondered why was the bus coming from the opposite direction and so late. As the driver slowed and the flashing lights came on, it was evident what had transpired. Robert picked the White students up first and they started filling up the seats from the front of the bus. Of course, by

the time the bus arrived at our stop to pick us up, only the seats at the back of the bus were vacant.

Ruby verbally attacked Robert on this trick. It was obvious that Robert was engaged in negotiations with the White students and their families and allowed himself to be squeezed by them. He could find no suitable solution. Once he said something to the effect that he would pick us up first one week and we could start filling the bus up from the front. The following week he would pick the White students up first and they would begin filling the bus up from the front. Either way the bus would be segregated. I think he wanted to go with this alternating procedure indefinitely. Ruby pressed him on the issue and stopped negotiating. Ruby told Robert that we were going to sit in seats of our own choosing and he would have to follow his conscience in determining what course of action he would take against us. He reminded her of the policy, but Ruby did not back down. She told us to take a seat wherever we wished. Nothing more was ever said about the seating arrangement.

Context Analysis

President Truman's 1945 recommendation to congress to form a Department of National Defense under a civilian secretary included establishment of a United States Air Force.¹ The United States Army and the United States Navy engaged in a protracted struggle over which of the two branches should have control of aviation.

¹ Herman S. Wolk, *Planning and Organizing the Postwar Air Force 1943-1947* (Washington, D. C.: Office of Air Force History United States Air Force, 1984), 149.

The National Security Act of 1947 became law on 26 July 1947. It created the Department of the Air Force, headed by the Secretary of the Air Force. Under the Department of the Air Force, the act established the United States Air Force, headed by the Chief of Staff, USAF. On 18 September 1947, W. Stuart Symington became Secretary of the Air Force, and on 26 September, General Carl A. Spaatz became the United States Air Force's first Chief of Staff.²

The armed forces progressed through the 1950s and 1960s. The Air Force had its own severe racial encounter at Travis Air Force Base, California in 1971. A four-day race riot occurred at the base between 21 and 24 May of that year. An airman of African heritage and a White airman got into a fight. Word of the fight spread. Airmen of African descent and White airmen from nearby barracks joined in. At one point the security forces in riot gear battled two hundred brawling airmen. High-pressure fire hoses were used to disperse the mobs. One hundred and thirty five people were arrested. Twenty-five of those arrested were White. Over thirty airmen and officers were treated at the base hospital for riot related injuries.³

This researcher has heard from several older military members of African descent that the military leadership at Travis Air Force Base was warned by them that the racial climate at the base was going to lead to something disastrous.

² Charles A. Ravenstein, *The Organization And Lineage Of The United States Air Force* (Washington, D. C.: Office of Air Force History, 1986), 10.

³ Alan L. Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates 1945 – 1964* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1985), 216.

Shortly after this episode, the Air Force established the Social Actions Program. Social Actions was the out growth of a race relation's task force for education purposes.

The Social Actions Program was designed to assist in sensitizing the military community to racial issues and concerns. The establishment of the Social Actions Program is evidence that the Air Force, and the military at large, had racial issues with which the institution was not confronting.

The Social Actions Office or the agency that addresses equal opportunity issues is where military members from all races and backgrounds could register complaints of unfair treatment.

In March of 1982, I was endorsed by the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., to serve as a chaplain in the United States Air Force. My spiritual development continued as I provided ministry and spiritual support to active duty personnel and their family members during peacetime and conflict.

Synergy

In the Fall of 1999, the Department of Defense released a sixteen-page report on the racial climate of the armed services. This Equal Opportunity Survey was the first of its kind. No survey of this magnitude and level of detail had ever been undertaken to assess active duty service members' perceptions of fair treatment and equal opportunity. The Equal Opportunity Survey was conducted by the Defense Manpower Data Center from September 1996 through February 1997. The 16-page survey form contained 81 questions, many with multiple parts. The survey was

developed for the purpose of providing a better understanding of service members' perceptions and experiences related to fair treatment and equal opportunity. The questionnaire asked service members about their overall racial/ethnic interactions, as well as about specific insensitive, discriminatory, harassing and even violent racial/ethnic interactions that had occurred in the 12-month period prior to filling out the survey. The survey also contained items on members' perceptions of official Equal Opportunity actions.

Compared to the other branches of the military, 70% of Air Force members of African heritage said they had experienced offensive encounters during their career because of their race.

A large number of military members of African descent had racially bothersome encounters, but did not report them.

In the survey, service members indicated whether or not they experienced insensitive, harassing, or discriminatory incidents during the preceding 12 months. Members who said they had experienced at least one such incident were then asked to report on the "most bothersome" situation.

Members who described their most bothersome situation tended to take passive steps to stop or defuse the situation. These steps included ignoring the discriminating or harassing behavior, acting as if the situation was not bothersome, and avoiding the offender.

The number of military members of African heritage who reveal their experiences and truthfully document their feelings in unofficial surveys is extremely higher than the number of grievances files through official military channels. What

accounts for this gross disparity? Are military members of African heritage afraid to file grievances through official channels? Is there a primary reason known only to them why they do not report offensive encounters through official channels? Does an ethical framework impact the decision making process of military members of African lineage? If so, how does that ethical framework inform their decision making process?

CHAPTER TWO

INGREDIENTS FOR MINISTRY MODEL

A ministry model that seeks to seriously reframe the dialogue on racism in America and move beyond past paradigms that were poorly constructed and yielded no admirable meaningful results must be transformative. The model must involve honest action research. The ingredients required in order for Reframing The Dialogue On Racism to be a fresh wholesome paradigm are transformative learning, avoiding uncritical critical thinking, the inclusion of critical critical thinking and avoiding past historical fallacies in research.

Transformative Learning

Learning and action research should be transformative. Growth and development in adult learners require critical reflection and revisiting perspectives on practice.¹ Critical reflection is the central process in transformative learning. The craving of human interest in emancipation drives people to reflect on the way they see themselves, their history, their knowledge, and their social roles. Gaining knowledge

¹ Patricia Cranton, *Professional Development as Transformative Learning* (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 1.

should result in the liberation of learners. Emancipatory knowledge is knowledge gained through critical self-reflection, as distinct from the knowledge gained from one's technical interest in the objective world or one's practical interest in social relationships. If people discover that they are constrained or oppressed by any of their perspectives, they may be challenged to revise them. Therefore, human beings learn, change, mature, and develop.²

Transformative learning is by definition concerned with social change. When people have the choice of seeing the world in a different way and when they are able to question the sources of their beliefs, this is the beginning of social change. When people are limited or restricted by their perspectives, change will not take place.³

Transformative learning is never automatic. Learners must have, what Patricia Cranton terms, emancipatory interest. People emancipatory interests come from their desire to grow, develop, and mature. People are interested in self-knowledge, self-awareness, and an understanding of how their past has shaped their ways of being. This includes a desire to be free from self and social distortions of knowledge.

An interest in emancipation leads, through critical self-reflection, to emancipatory knowledge. This knowledge is described as emancipation from libidinal, linguistic, epistemic, institutional, or environmental forces that limit our options and our rational control over our lives but have been taken for granted or seen as beyond human control. These forces include misconceptions, ideologies, and

² Ibid., 75.

³ Ibid., 141.

psychological distortions in prior learning that produce or perpetuate unexamined relations of dependence.⁴

Critical reflection, which is primary to transformative learning, includes three types of reflection. They are content reflection, process reflection, and premise reflection. All three types of reflection are critical to Reframing The Dialogue On Racism.

Content reflection occurs when individuals reflect on the content or description of a problem. Process reflection involves thinking about the strategies used to solve the problem rather than the content of the problem itself. Premise reflection leads people to question the relevance of the problem itself.⁵

Uncritical Critical Thinking

Uncritical critical thinking does not promote transformative learning. Uncritical critical thinking removes the political and ethical dimensions of thinking. Teachers and students are not encouraged to confront why they tend to think as they do about themselves, the world around them, and their relationship to that world.

Uncritical critical thinking advocates are unable to transcend the boundaries of formal thinking. As they reduce thinking to the micrological skills, they teach a fragmented version of scientific thinking (the highest expression of formality). Students are taught to differentiate, to group, to categorize, to identify common properties, to distinguish relevant from irrelevant information, to relate points, to

⁴ Ibid., 200-21.

⁵ Ibid., 81-82.

infer, and to justify- usually in isolation from any scientific or large conceptual problem.⁶

Regarding racism, uncritical critical thinkers will make isolated assumptions about this phenomena and never consider the larger conceptual problems related to it or the dynamics connected with this evil.

Critical Critical Thinking

Critical critical thinking promotes transformative learning. What is critical critical thinking? Authentically this type of thinking moves in an emancipatory direction with an omnipresent sense of self-awareness. Moving in an emancipatory direction implies a concern with the development and maturation of a liberated mind, a critical consciousness, and a free society. Teachers who are critical thinkers are aware of the construction of their own consciousness and the ways that social and institutional forces work to undermine their autonomy as professionals.⁷ Critical critical thinking students, teachers, and people in various vocations are conscious of the ways that social and institutional forces work to impair their independence as professionals.

Emancipatory teaching leads to emancipatory learning. Emancipatory teacher thinking sets the self 'in question.' Self-images, inherited dogmas, and absolute beliefs are interrogated, teachers begin to see themselves in relation to the world

⁶ Joe L. Kincheloe, *Toward a Critical Politics of Teacher Thinking* (Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey, 1993), 25.

⁷ Ibid., 26.

around them, to perceive the school as a piece of a larger mosaic. Teachers begin to see an inseparable relationship between thinking and acting.⁸ Students and learners are similarly affected.

Thinking affects social practice. It is never detached. How people think about teaching works to change or maintain the status quo.⁹

Avoiding Historical Fallacies

Reframing The Dialogue On Racism is a new approach and discipline. This new paradigm surges beneath traditional feeble debates and dialogues about race and seeks to address the issue of racism. Many travelers have gotten lost in dialogues on race and color. The Reframing the Dialogue on Racism paradigm concedes that others have gone in the wrong direction on the issue, or become stymied at certain intersections. One of the objectives of the Reframing the Dialogue on Racism is to put up some distinguishing correct markers at some of the forks in the road that will assist travelers in making the proper choices and continue moving in the proper direction.

Racism is intimately connected to American history, dating from the days of slavery. When dealing with the issue of racism and its impact, researchers must guard against being susceptible to certain fallacies that have plagued historians. Reframing The Dialogue On Racism seeks to avoid some of the traditional fallacies

⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁹ Ibid., 27.

that have precipitated heated debates, but led to no meaningful discoveries or lasting positive changes.

One of the ways in which historians and researchers have failed is in the area of fallacies of question framing. David Fischer enumerates several fallacies of question framing to which historians and researchers have been prone to submit.

First, the fallacy of many questions is a common error which has been variously defined as: framing a question in such a way that two or more questions are asked at once, and a single answer is required; framing a question in such a way as to beg another question; framing a question which makes a false presumption; or framing a complex question but demanding a simple answer.¹⁰

Reframing The Dialogue On Racism must reject these ingenious ploys.

Secondly is the fallacy of metaphysical questions. This is an attempt to resolve a nonempirical problem by empirical means. In its most contemporary form, this fallacy consists in the framing of a question which cannot be resolved before the researcher settles some central metaphysical problem such as ‘What is the nature of things?’ or ‘What is the inner secret of reality?’ These are questions that will not be resolved before the ocean freezes over. A prime illustration is the problem which is eternally popular among Civil War historians: ‘Was the War inevitable?’ A historian cannot resolve the issue of inevitability by empirical research.¹¹

Honest research must deal with the reality of events. Racism is real and is the starting point for all serious reframing efforts.

¹⁰ David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies* (New York, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), 8.

Thirdly is the fallacy of fictional questions. This is an ancient form of error, which has recently been elevated into an explicit method and proclaimed before the world as a whole new thing in historical inquiry. It consists in an attempt to demonstrate by an empirical method what might have happened in history, as if in fact it actually had.¹²

Fourth is the fallacy of semantical questions. This procedure consists in an attempt to resolve, by empirical investigation of an object, a semantical question about the name by which that object is called, thereby confusing actual happenings with verbal descriptions of actual happening.¹³

Fifth is the fallacy of declarative questions, which consists in confusing an interrogative with a declarative statement. It violates a fundamental rule of empirical question-framing, which requires that a question must have an open end, which will allow a free and honest choice, with minimal bias and maximal flexibility.¹⁴

The question for Reframing The Dialogue On Racism is open ended. Can racism be significantly curved or even expunged? Any one who answers this question has a choice.

Six is the fallacy of tautological questions, which is the framing of questions in such a way that they are true by definition and cannot be empirically contradicted without self-contradiction. A tautological question is not really a question at all, but a

¹² Ibid., 15.

¹³ Ibid., 21.

¹⁴ Ibid., 24.

declaration. Moreover, it is doubly declarative, for it asks nothing and asserts the same thing twice.¹⁵

Another area in which historians have faltered is what David Fischer terms fallacies of factual verification. Fischer discusses several factual verification fallacies.

There is the fallacy of pseudo proof. This is committed in a verification statement which seems at first sight to be a precise and specific representation of reality but which proves, on close inspection, to be literally meaningless.¹⁶

The fallacy of the irrelevant proof consists in asking one question and answering another.¹⁷

The fallacy of the negative proof is an attempt to sustain a factual proposition merely by negative evidence. This occurs whenever a historian declares that 'there is no evidence that X is the case,' and then proceeds to affirm or assume that not-X is the case.¹⁸

The fallacy of the presumptive proof consists in advancing a proposition and shifting the burden of proof or disproof to others.¹⁹

The fallacy of misplaced precision is an empirical statement which is made precise beyond the practical limits of accuracy.²⁰

¹⁵ Ibid., 31.

¹⁶ Ibid., 43.

¹⁷ Ibid., 45.

¹⁸ Ibid., 47.

¹⁹ Ibid., 48.

²⁰ Ibid., 61.

Credible research should provide good relevant evidence and the best evidence. The best relevant evidence is that which is most nearly immediate to the event itself. Evidence should always be affirmative. Negative evidence is a contradiction in terms- it is no evidence at all. The burden of proof for historical assertion always rests upon the author, not with the author's critics or readers.²¹

Individuals who seek to reframe the dialogue on racism must not fall victim to the same fallacies that have cause past historians and researchers to stumble. Otherwise, our efforts will be just as meaningless as the efforts of earlier laborers who had an interest in the subject of racism, but who stumbled and lost focus.

²¹ Ibid., 61-63.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Biblical Foundations

The ethical framework that informs the people of God in their decision making process has a spiritual foundation. When the people of God live in an environment where the dominant culture operates out of a non-spiritually based ethical framework, the former group must allow their spiritually based ethical framework to guide their decisions. This will cause tension between the oppressor and the oppressed. It will also lead to the spiritually based culture committing acts that are not in harmony with the rules and practices of the dominant culture.

Several stories in the Bible illustrate the point that the people of God who found themselves in oppressive environments made spiritually based ethical decisions that led them to commit acts that did not harmonize with the rules that emerged from the non-spiritually based ethical framework of the dominant society in which they found themselves. A story in the book of Daniel serves as an illustration.

In the book of Daniel readers are told about three Hebrew men who lived in Babylon. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were members of a culture and people, the Hebrews, whose faith was and continued to be shaped by a past encounter, which the Hebrew nation marked as a transformative event in their history. Each child born

into a Hebrew family at a certain period in life was introduced to this event. This event was the deliverance of the Hebrew people from Egyptian bondage under Moses. The exodus from Egypt was celebrated annually by the covenant community to which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego belonged, serving as a reminder of God's power and faithfulness to people who put their full trust in this Being. The exodus story was a cornerstone in the spiritual experience of the Hebrew people. This story of the Hebrew people's faith in the God who delivered their ancestors from bondage contributed to and under girded Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's spiritual development.

The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, had a golden image constructed by craftsmen. Citizens were instructed to bow down and worship this image upon hearing the sound of the flutes and coronets and other instruments. This was the rule of the kingdom and all citizens were expected to adhere. When the horns were played, the people bowed and worshipped the image as the public code dictated. However, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to participate. They could not ethically embrace this rule based on their spiritual roots and teachings.

The King was informed that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down to the image at the sound of the instruments. The King told the trio that if they did not bow he would have them thrown into the fiery furnace. On the other hand if they bowed, the king would have kept them out of the fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not change their minds and told the monarch: "...Our God in whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O

king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up,” (Daniel 3:17-18).

In Babylon, there were two distinct ethical frameworks. There was the non-spiritually based ethical framework of the oppressor and the spiritually based ethical framework of the oppressed. The threat by the king to take the lives of the three men if they failed to conform was intended to force the trio to allow the ethics of survival to shape their decision making process. Survival ethics demands a person or people do whatever is necessary to stay alive, which is to live at the lowest level of human existence. To live at the lowest level of human existence is ungodly on the part of people who embrace this ideology, as well as on the part of the community who arranges events to make this level of existence an option.

Their spiritually based ethical framework assisted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in functioning within the oppressive society in which they found themselves without being held captive to an ethics of survival.

While not anxious to go to the flames, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s spiritually based ethical framework informed them that it was better they enter the furnace and maintain their spiritual integrity, rather than burn their spiritually based ethical framework and embrace the ethically unsound destructive rules and codes that had emerged from a non-spiritually based ethical framework and live. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego coveted their spirituality, and their spiritually based ethical framework which kept them at peace with their God and themselves, more than their personal safety.

The king's assessment, as well as the assessment of other citizens, was that the three were being defiant. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not being defiant or rebellious. Their refusal to allow an ethics of survival, which was fashioned by a non-spiritually based ethical framework, to shape their decisions was an act of integrity.

Historical Foundations

Morality is a set of social rules and standards that guide the conduct of people in a culture. It is one aspect of a culture's entire way of life, and has a special importance to everyone who has been brought up within the framework of that way of life.¹ The main task of ethics is to explain moral behavior.²

Must ethical standards and rules have religious foundations to be validly binding? If God did not exist, would that mean that there is no right or wrong? Established organized religions of Western civilization, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have traditionally responded affirmatively to these two questions. According to this tradition, God, the all powerful, all-good, all-knowing and all-loving Creator of the universe, is the ground and source of moral duty as well as the ground and source of existence. Without God there would be no universally valid rules or conduct, but only consistently varying norms each society adopts as its own moral code.

¹ Paul W. Taylor, editor, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, 3rd edition (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1978), 6.

² *Ibid.*, 293.

This way of understanding the relation between morality and religion is based on the conception of God as the Spiritual and loving Creator of all humanity. The appropriate human response to such a Being is one of gratitude and love. Since God is also conceived to have infinite goodness, knowledge, and power, God alone is deserving of worship. The divine Being is thought of as a Transcendent Person who has every perfection to the highest degree. To worship this Being is to acknowledge the Creator's authority over all human concerns and interests. It involves placing one's whole trust in this Being, remaining loyal by letting one's will be constantly governed by the will of this Being, and finding one's rightful living and supreme fulfillment in obedience to this Being's commands out of love and devotion to this Transcendent Reality.³

People who have been brought up in one of the great religious traditions are inclined to think of the distinction between right and wrong as having a religious foundation.⁴ For them, the decision making process begins and ends on spiritual ground.

There is, however, another way of understanding the relationship between morality and religion. This view asserts that moral norms are not based on religious foundations, but are grounded in human nature and human society. The decision making process does not begin and end on spiritual or religious ground. The function of religious beliefs, attitudes, and practices, in this instant, is to deepen and strengthen

³ Ibid., 561.

⁴ Joseph Gerard Brennan, *Ethics and Morals* (New York, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), 7.

a people's commitment to its whole way of life, including its moral code. Religion is a cultural institution serving a specific social purpose. It gives support to a society's norms, unifying and preserving its way of life, and reinforcing people's adherence to its common shared values. The concept of God is a symbolic personification of the highest moral ideals of the culture, and images of divine power and divine law signify the legitimacy of those ideals. Under this conception, which is non-spiritually based, stories about God are ways in which a society's basic values are given mythical and dramatic expression. The traditions and standards of conduct shared by a people, the general world-view and outlook on life they hold, as well as the meaning of its history, are all embodied in the poetic and imaginative forms of its religious life.⁵

This concept has wide spread support, as most moral philosophers agree that ethics can be constructed without immediate appeal to a religious framework.⁶

This way of understanding the relation between religion and morality does not make the moral duty of human beings dependent upon a Supernatural or Transcendent Source. Although the authoritativeness of a society's moral code is given symbolic representation in the concept of a Supreme Being or Ultimate Reality, the validity of that code is not derived from the actual existence and nature of such a Being. This is a human centered way of regarding religion, morality, and ethics.⁷

The view that for some groups moral norms are not based on religious foundations but are grounded in human nature and human society and the function of

⁵ Paul W. Taylor, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, 561-562.

⁶ Joseph Gerard Brennan, *Ethics and Moral*, 8.

⁷ Paul W. Taylor, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, 562.

religious beliefs, attitudes, and practices is to deepen and strengthen a people's commitment to its whole way of life, including its moral code, succinctly describes the foundation upon which the ethical framework of the dominant society in America rests or is rooted.

America's dominant culture controls most the country's institutions. Most members of that culture say they are Christian. However, there is nothing in the Holy Bible, the primary source of reference for born-again Christian believers, that supports or defends racism directly or indirectly.

The ethical framework of the dominant culture in America out of which racism emerged, Barndt's description serving as the working definition, has three unique permanent glaring features. Each feature is required in order to make the ethical framework consistently operative. The features are: the ethical framework is not spiritually based, the ethical framework is self-serving and the ethical framework is inherently weak.

The first unique feature of the ethical framework of America's dominant culture out of which racism emerged is that it is non-spiritually based. The framework has all of the components of an ethical system constructed apart from a purely spiritual foundation, religion merely giving mythical and dramatic expression to the society's values. A non-spiritually based ethical framework begins and ends with itself and is wholly subjective, being shaped by opinions, preferences and inclinations; and these subjective interests are not surrendered to any higher authority or power.

This approach treats religion as a means, as an activity with an external aim. Such a practice is degrading to true religion.⁸

Spirituality does not shape the ethical framework of White America. Instead, the non-spiritually based ethical framework is shaped by them and a pseudo spiritual view, accompanied by an attending theology is carefully fashioned that can be couched within the ethical framework. The dominant culture must insure that any deterioration in the framework is negligible. Elements of spirituality are incorporated into the non-spiritually based ethical framework to give it dignity, not because of a complete devotion to Almighty God and biblical teachings.

Wholesale systematic institutionalized oppression and racism contradicts any notion of a people or society being governed by the *will* of that Transcendent Reality who created humanity. An oppressive society or people are out of harmony with the biblical teachings of the Christian faith, despite claims to the contrary, and does not function from a spiritual base.

Spirituality is that powerful transcendent element that shapes the life of an individual and the collective lives of a people and offers hope and authentic answers to them at a moment in human history when, as the late Howard Thurman said, their backs are against the wall.⁹ It brings a person or people to an awareness of their relationship with the God of the universe and as a result they are endowed with new

⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures On The Philosophy Of Religion*, vol. 1, Peter C. Hodgson, ed., R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart, trans. (Berkeley: California: University of California Press, 1995), 199.

⁹ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1976), 11.

courage, fearlessness, and power for the journey, and are able to engage in an authentic existence.

The challenge for people of African descent in America has been to live as authentically as possible in the oppressive environment in which they have found themselves. White America has never and does not now live with their backs against the wall. Therefore, the spirituality that has shaped the lives of people of African heritage in the United States, whose backs have always been against the wall at any given moment in history in this country, does not fashion the lives, religion and ethical system of White America.

The Bible says 'By their fruit ye shall know them.'¹⁰ It is a fruit also by which one recognizes the soil from which it sprang.¹¹ Racism sprang from extremely poor soil, upon which only thorns and thistles have grown since the creation of the world.

Since racism evolved from an ethical framework that has no spiritual base and is non-relational, eternal concepts such as spirituality, faith, hope, mercy, freedom, and love are incorporated where possible and practical into the framework. These concepts are incorporated only where possible and practical because they have to be shrewdly defined, manipulated and strategically positioned within the non-spiritually based ethical framework so as not to dilute the strength or disrupt the operability of the framework in any manner. To whatever extent the non-spiritually based ethical

¹⁰ Matthew 7:20

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will To Power*, Walter Kaufmann, ed., Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, trans. (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 149.

framework is weakened or disrupted, the power of racism is automatically reduced, unraveled, and shattered to the same degree at minimum.

H. Shelton Smith asserts that White racism is a new term for an old American malady. The social disease may have been operative from the moment that “twenty Negrars” were put ashore at Jamestown in 1619.¹²

Racism is more than a social malady. Racism at its core is fundamentally a spiritual problem with apparent social manifestations. Racism presupposes dominance and has to do with the abuse and misuse of power by the dominant group.

Leonard Lovett recognizes that from a theological-ethical perspective racism is a spiritual and moral problem, insisting that it is the perverse worship of the self, (finite) rooted in spiritual pride. Racism is self-deification in its purest form. Self-glorification and arrogant ingratitude constitute the essential notion of sin. Racism is much more than ingratitude. It is itself religion. It is a decisive act of turning away from God. It is life according to the flesh (Romans 8:5). It is the worship of the creature rather than the Creator. God is displaced by human machinations.¹³ The Absolute, the Supreme Being, or Ultimate Reality, which is synonymous with the expression God, is no longer the sustaining center.

All religions and or gods emerge from some concept, the religion and or God being a representation of the concept. Religion cannot be separated from the God that

¹² H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1971), 3.

¹³ Susan E. Davies and Sister Paul Teresa Hennessee, *Ending Racism In The Church*, Leonard Lovett, *Color Lines and the Religion of Racism* (Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press, 1998), 24-25.

gives the religion it's meaning and vitality. If racism is itself religion, then the non-spiritually based ethical framework from which racism has emerged has to be the god or the ultimate reality.

The non-spiritually based ethical framework (god) is the construction of human beings, making the ethical framework of America's dominant culture a finite construct. Finite creatures sustain it. A finite construct can be no better than its fashioners and the fashioners no better than the construct. The framework does not point to anything beyond itself and has no root in anything infinite. It is solely dependent on its fashioners. Because human beings constructed the framework there is no Spirit in it, and what is only form is considered essential and comprehending it is made a game. The framework survives only as a result of supporters affirming it. Without a field of supporters the non-spiritually based ethical framework (god) will die, compared to God whose existence is eternal and is not dependent on supporters or their affirmation.

Because the ethical framework of the dominant society is a human construct and is not spiritually based it is, in view of the Bible, a sophisticated form of idolatry. From this sophisticated form of idolatry, a pantheon of gods has been fashioned. In the pantheon is a set of twin gods. They are White supremacy and White privilege. These gods have been and continue to be honored, glorified and deified. While Jesus of Nazareth is taught and preached, there are times when Jesus the Christ and His teachings can be suspended from the ethical framework because the Christ and Christianity does not and cannot shape a non-spiritually based ethical framework. The Christ cannot be given liberties that could possibly lead to the framework being

influenced in a positive permanent manner, as Jesus' spiritually based relational teachings are the opposite of the non-relational views of the framework. Jesus' suspension is justified whenever the preservation of the non-spiritually based ethical framework is threatened. However, there is never a time when any of the gods of the pantheon can be completely suspended from the framework.

The external feature of White skin color has been assigned an important, though artificial, position in the framework. This feature, however, has no significance in the sight of the Infinite. As Hegel points out, Spirit witnesses only concerning spirit, not about external things.¹⁴

Hegel further asserts that the consummate religion is the one in which the absolute idea- God as spirit in the form of truth and revealedness- is an object of consciousness. The Christian religion discloses itself to humanity as the supreme absolute religion.¹⁵

The supreme absolute religion, Christianity, must be spiritually based. In all things it must begin and end with God, as revealed in Jesus the Christ, who was the full revelation of God. In absolute religion God is the sustaining center, which breathes life into all that is good within a society. The people in the society are occupied with God. Occupation with God alone is fulfilling and satisfying by itself. This occupation is the consciousness of absolute truth.¹⁶

¹⁴ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures On The Philosophy*, 337.

¹⁵ Ibid., 111-112.

¹⁶ Ibid., 114. (I borrowed Hegel's central thought and applied it to my views).

The ethical framework of the dominant society in America does not meet this requirement. Their ethical framework is not occupied with God. The great unending occupation is with the finite construct of the non-spiritually based ethical framework and its maintenance.

It is impossible to harmonize a non-spiritually based ethical framework and Christianity without doing a horrendous disservice to Christianity. A non-spiritually based ethical framework is alien to Christianity.

The second unique feature of the ethical framework out of which racism has emerged is that it is self-serving. The non-spiritually based ethical framework is designed to serve the dominant group primarily and their descendants. It is not an all-embracing inclusive framework.

According to Robert B. Ashmore, in constructing a moral system, important questions must be decided concerning the criteria for right and wrong action, who is to count morally, as well as the relevance of rules to the assessment of actions.¹⁷

The non-spiritually based ethical framework of the dominant group in America has allowed for the construction of a moral system that has pre-determined who counts morally, as well as the relevance of the rules of the assessment of actions.

A non-spiritually based ethical framework at the core is deficient and requires a coping strategy. The self-serving posture of the non-spiritually based ethical framework is in reality a coping strategy. The self-serving dimension, coping strategy, of the framework has four sustaining features.

¹⁷ Robert B. Ashmore, *Building A Moral System* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1987), 49.

(1) The self-serving dimension of the non-spiritually based ethical framework permits and necessarily requires, in order to be effective, that the dominant group treat its members one way, and treat the group they seek to control and enforce their prejudices about another way. It is pre-determined that members of the dominant group are the people who count. This is called a double standard.

The double standard started during slavery. Throughout the Colonial Period and after the Revolutionary War slave codes embodied the criminal law and procedure applied against enslaved Africans. The codes regulated slave life from cradle to grave and were virtually uniform across states, each with the overriding goal of upholding slavery. The codes not only enumerated the applicable law but also prescribed the social boundaries for slaves such as where they could go, what types of activity they could engage in, and the types of contracts they could enter into. Slave codes were a blatant double standard,¹⁸ as they applied only to people of African descent and not to people of European descent.

Raping a Black woman was not a crime under most slave codes. This reflected the reality that slave women were sexual as well as economic property. If a slave master wanted to force sex on his human property, this was perfectly legal. The number of mulatto children born to slave women was tangible evidence of this practice.¹⁹ Of course, the raping of a White woman was a criminal offense.

Writing about the Revolutionary Period and immediately thereafter, Lester B. Scherer shows the self-serving element of the people in power saying that everywhere

¹⁸ Kathryn K. Russell, *The Color of Crime* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 14-15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

there was a sense of new beginnings, but actual change was notably selective.

Ironically, America's freedom gave African slavery a longer life.²⁰

While never using the term self-serving, Scherer reveals another self-serving act on the part of the dominant culture shortly after the Revolutionary War and the commencement of nationhood. Scherer asserts that in the minds of White people the country was White. On 4 July 1776, the Continental Congress appointed Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams as a committee to design a seal for the new nation. The committee's design, which on one side likened the Americans to the biblical chosen people, indicated on the other side just where God's people had come from. England, Holland, Scotland, Ireland, France, and Germany were symbolically represented as the main sources of America's population, ignoring the fact that one in five of the nation's inhabitants was of African stock.²¹

Slaves were viewed as sub-human and inferior. White people were considered fully human and superior. It was against the law to teach slaves how to read and write, while it was desired and required that the White population, as much as possible, acquire these skills.

A double standard was insured during slavery through brute force and inhumane legislation. Brute force cemented the cracks that inhumane legislation failed to seal.

²⁰ Lester B. Scherer, *Slavery And The Churches In Early America 1619-1819* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 150.

²¹ Ibid., 118.

After the conclusion of the Civil War, the double standard was maintained through the adoption of Black codes. These codes governed the movement and behavior of free people of African descent. In their totality, the Black codes created a new system of involuntary servitude, expressly prohibited by the newly adopted Thirteenth Amendment. A double standard was frequently applied in the application of the law. Black people faced harsher criminal penalties than White people. Thousands of Black people were executed for offenses that White people were given prison time for committing. White people committing crimes against Black people were largely ignored. For example, the Texas codes made it a crime for a White person to murder a Black person. Yet, in Texas, between 1865 and 1866, there were acquittals in five hundred cases where someone White was charged with killing someone Black.²²

The laws of segregation insured that the double standard would be legally enforced and perpetuated, as the biases of the dominant society regarding people of African descent continued to be enforced.

The self-serving aspect of the dominant culture's non-spiritually based ethical framework has always demanded that situations and laws be formed which allowed their descendants derived maximum benefits and non-whites obtained minimum gain.²³

²² Katheryn K. Russell, *The Color of Crime*, 19-20.

²³ Howard Thurman was the earliest writer who, in my opinion, discussed in a systematic fashion and from a theological perspective the maximum benefit and minimum benefit saga. More will be said about this concept annotating Reverend Thurman's work.

The law required White people to sit at the front of city and interstate buses and people of African descent sit in the rear. Even if there were vacant seats in the White section of the bus, people of African heritage were prohibited from occupying them.

Customs during the era of segregation insured a double standard. When a White customer entered a store, a Black customer was rudely abandoned by the White salesperson and the White customer served. In department stores, White customers went into fitting rooms and tried on clothing to make sure the garments were acceptable before purchasing. Customers of African descent were not allowed to try on garments prior to purchasing. In nearly all business establishments, people of African heritage had to enter through a back door or side door. White customers entered through the front door. In some stores, people of African heritage were not permitted to enter.

During the era of segregation, especially in the South, the education of the White population was seriously attended to and engaged, while in many cases Black people were left to fend for themselves. The tax dollars of Black people were used in the uplifting and intellectual development of White children. Never during the era of segregation did schools in Black communities, public schools or colleges, receive the same resources and funding as did schools in White communities, neither in the South or any other section of the country. White people always made sure that only a fraction of the money allowed for the education of White children was provided for the education of Black children.

During the eras of slavery and segregation, Africans and people of African descent were treated in a dehumanizing, exploitive, uncaring manner that assisted the dominant culture in enforcing their prejudices.

The double standard is one of the singularly defining hallmark features of the non-spiritually based ethical framework. It is common to hear people of African heritage say: “They,” meaning White people or the dominant culture, “do not treat us the same. If a Black fellow breaks the law, they throw the book at him. A White fellow can do the same thing or worse and they give him a slap on the wrist at the most. In the majority of cases, they just look the other way.”

The double standard guarantees the educational, cultural, social, and professional exposure, as well as protection and success of members of the dominant group. Members of the controlled group do not have these guarantees. The illustrations cited are only a casual pictorial.

(2) The self-serving dimension of the non-spiritually based ethical framework permits the framework to be permanently stained by contradictions and incongruities. People who support the non-spiritually based ethical framework are controlled by being challenged to think contradictions and conform to them. Conforming to contradictions is itself a contradiction.

One of the earliest contradictions manifested by the non-spiritually based ethical framework involved religion. According to biblical anthropology, God created humanity in the image of the Divine, (Genesis 1:27). From this fundamental doctrine Christian thought derived the claim that all people are created equal in the sight of God, and that they therefore owe one another equality of respect and

goodwill.²⁴ Printed sermons and tracts on the subject of slavery from the early 1700s onward, however, make it clear that church leaders, with rare exceptions, viewed African bondage, which was racist and oppressive, as compatible with the Christian faith.²⁵

Another religious inconsistency pointed out by scholars involved the Evangelical Movement and the period of the revivals.

Evangelism took firm root in America with the spread of the Great Awakening. Starting in the middle colonies in the 1720s, reaching full force in the early 1740s when evangelist George Whitefield traveled the provinces with his emotion-stirring revivals. Mr. Whitefield embodied contradictions being well intentioned, but adapting the Christian message to fit the social-cultural, racialized context in which he found himself. Mr. Whitefield embodied the racial views of early White evangelicals. At the same time that Whitefield preached his message of radical equality in Christ, and shared the salvation message with slaves, he was a supporter of slavery.

Whitefield's orphanage was located in Georgia and he worried that it could not develop without slaves. He testified before Parliament in 1741 in support of the introduction of slavery in Georgia. He further petitioned for the introduction of slaves by arguing that God had created the Georgia climate for people of African descent, that the large investment in the colony would be lost without increased

²⁴ H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1972), vii.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

production, that the orphanage would not survive without the benefit of slaves, and, consistent with his calling, the unsaved would become saved.²⁶

Rather than being awakened spiritually, it seems that what the Colonists were awakened to were more efficient ways to rationalize the practice of enforcing their biases about Africans.

Alan Gallay writes that evangelicals felt guilty enough to attempt to reform the institution of slavery, but they sought no substantial change. They learned to rationalize the system: they were raising Africans from their heathenish condition and introducing them to Christianity. Conversion of slaves was central to their self-image as Christian slaveholders. They rationalized the brutality of slavery by believing that however horrible the existence of slaves in this world, they might, if saved, find bliss in the more important after world. Evangelical religion swept the South as new generations of slaveholders adopted and perfected these thoughts on the slave system.²⁷

A political contradiction among Colonists centers on the Revolution. The Colonists fought and won their independence from the tyrannical crown of England, but kept Africans enslaved. Granting independence to the slaves would have demanded the Colonists acknowledge the full humanity of African slaves, whom they viewed as sub-human, abandoning the double standard that prevailed in the Colonies.

²⁶ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided By Faith* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000), 25-27.

²⁷ John B. Boles, ed., *Masters & Slaves In The House Of The Lord*, Alan Gallay, *Planters and Slaves in the Great Awakening* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 1988), 35-36.

The Colonists contended that they despised oppression because it was evil and unacceptable, but had no problem enforcing oppression in the form of African slavery.

Many writers have highlighted this contradiction. Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith point out that some Revolutionary leaders began to question the contradiction between the institution of slavery and the American rhetoric of a right to freedom from the slavery of British rule.²⁸

James W. Loewen also annotates this contradiction from the era of the Revolution.²⁹

Lester B. Scherer contends that the Colonists were able to tolerate this contradiction by employing four common procedures to divide White liberty from Black liberty. One was simply to acknowledge the contradiction, but plead helplessness in the face of it.

Another way to talk about liberty and still hold slaves was to blame it on someone else, specifically the British slave-trading interest, which presumably pressured the Crown into disallowing the import restrictions enacted from time to time by provincial legislatures.

A third way to escape the antislavery implication of revolutionary language was to play on a contradiction within the natural right ideology itself. Both liberty and property were inalienable rights. The slave's right to liberty was locked at a dead

²⁸ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided By Faith*, 28.

²⁹ James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (New York, New York: Touchstone, 1996), 148-149.

center against the owner's property rights. Slaves were property. If to deprive people of property by taxing them without their consent was tyranny, then to curtail or abolish their property in slaves was also tyranny.

The fourth device for neutralizing the antislavery implications of the Revolution and maintain the contradiction was to separate people of African descent from the category of humanity.³⁰

According to Scherer, the making of the Constitution was the final act in the nation's birth and the confirming of the contradiction. He asserts that in the Beardian tradition of historical writing the Convention of 1787 contradicted the Revolution by assuring the continued domination of families of wealth and position. From a slave's-eye view neither interpretation would satisfy, for it appeared from the outcome that the Revolution was fought for White liberties, after which the Federal Convention in Philadelphia merely determined which White men would rule.

The question of slavery was never debated in the Convention. Everyone understood that silence on that issue was an absolute precondition for union.³¹

Slaves and former slaves recognized this contradiction and the non-spiritual dimension associated with this saga of American independence. Frederick Douglass, a former slave, delivered a speech in 1852 regarding the celebration of the 4th of July, also known as Independence Day. He addressed the hypocrisy or contradictory behavior of White Colonists having fought successfully to free themselves from the domination of England, while fighting another war in the Colonies that kept slavery

³⁰ Lester B. Scherer, *Slavery And The Churches*, 108-110.

³¹ Ibid., 111-112.

in tact. Douglass says of that contradiction and of others he enumerates: “Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the old world, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.”³²

Black men were drafted to go abroad to fight and defend America and the Constitution during World War I and World War II. Upon returning to the United States, these defenders of the Constitution and of liberty could not vote— a right the Constitution guaranteed to all upstanding Americans.

Thousands of Black males in segregated public schools during the 1950s and early 1960s, along with Black females, said the Pledge of Allegiance everyday at school and all the while unjust laws were being fashioned by White lawmakers to retard their development and the improvement of people of African descent. Upon reaching the proper age, many of these young Black males were drafted in the military and sent to Vietnam to fight. They were fighting for ‘liberty and justice for all.’

Many of these Black men who fought for liberty and justice for all during the campaigns in Vietnam returned home and had to march in local communities and fight for the right to vote, a right guaranteed by the Constitution.

³² Web: http://douglass.speech.nwu.edu/doug_a10.htm Print: The speech was originally published as a pamphlet. It can be located in James M. Gregory's, *"Frederick Douglass, the Orator"* (New York, New York, 1893), 103-06.

James W. Loewen in his work *Lies My Teacher Told Me* highlights the abundance of contradictions that are advanced in public schools. Loewen writes, as an illustration, that the idealistic spark of the Revolution at first made the United States a proponent of democracy around the world. However, slavery and its concomitant ideas, which legitimated hierarchy and dominance, sapped the nation's Revolutionary idealism. Most textbooks never hint at this clash of ideas³³ or contradiction.

An ethical framework cannot be spiritually based and at the same time systematically oppressive, devise laws that favor one element of society and disfavors another, and or support, covertly or overtly, customs and practices that sustain systematic institutionalized oppression and racism. A spiritually based ethical framework and oppressive racist institutions and life styles functioning harmoniously in the same society are incongruent. To be positively spiritual, as well as oppressive and racist at the same time, is antithetical. No theological treatment can bring about a synthesis of these incongruent concepts. They are incompatible and irreconcilable theologically. What appears to be congruency is achieved only as a result of developing a colossal series of bogus theories, a supporting vocabulary of selfish narrowly defined words, and contradictory practices.

From a theological or spiritual perspective racism has no element that is beneficial to both the White America and Black America. This truth is readily understandable because a system cannot be racist and redemptive.

³³ James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told*, 149.

The incongruities, inconsistencies and contradictions that support the non-spiritually based ethical framework are the greatest evidence that the dominant culture in America does not live in a *true* world or a world in which truth has meaning. Truth is not deceptive, inconsistent or contradictory. Neither does it depend on contrivance for its power and existence. The Spirit leads to truth. The framework is a non-spiritually based construct fashioned by finite beings. A finite construct, regardless of how neatly arranged, cannot lead to truth.

(3) The self-serving dimension of the non-spiritually based ethical framework allows the dominant culture to endure huge financial losses and a host of inconveniences as necessary evils.

Investigating the hegemonic function of the law and slaves being prohibited from testifying against White people, Eugene Genovese reveals that the tenacious opposition to people of African descent giving testimony against White people proved a disadvantage. If, for example, a White man robbed a plantation, the testimony of the owner's slaves had to be ignored. If a White man killed another's slave and thereby also robbed him of hundreds or possibly thousands of dollars, the slaveholder had to settle accounts by personal violence or not at all unless some other White man had witnessed the crime. In Louisiana in 1840 the ultimate irony occurred, when a White man who had incited slaves to insurrection had to be acquitted because their confessions could not be used against him. In this as in many other ways, the racism of the White community worked against them; but they

regarded these expensive inconveniences as necessary evils and bore them doggedly.³⁴

(4) The self-serving dimension of the non-spiritually based ethical framework does not provide opportunities for the dominant culture to seriously reflect on its selfish contrived contradictory actions or assess from a human emotional standpoint the harm inflicted on its victims.

Robert B. Ashmore makes a distinction between customary morality and reflective morality. Customary morality refers to those standards and rules found in ancestral habits. Individuals accept and act according to those norms simply because they are the prescribed norms. At the extreme, customary morality tolerates no critical reflection or challenge of the socially accepted patterns of behavior.

Reflective morality, on the other hand, appeals to the reason or judgment of the individual. The essence of reflective morality is knowing reasons for or against customary instructions, leading to specification of criteria for judging various ways of acting. Justification of customary behavior and instructions is the important concept at this stage. It is no longer considered sufficient to conform to community practices; those practices must themselves be examined critically.³⁵

The framework has a built in component that intentionally disrupts any serious reflection or examination. The non-spiritually based ethical framework is distrustful of serious meditative reflection.

³⁴ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 40.

³⁵ Robert B. Ashmore, *Building A Moral System*, 2.

It appears that conscience must be subordinated to the collective judgment of the framework. The right to private judgement is granted, but one must be denied the right to take action based on that judgment when in conflict with the framework. Those who would act on their judgment against the collective judgment embodied in the framework usually face penalties such as ostracism.

The lack of opportunities to reflect seriously on the moral conduct of the group reduces the odds of any authentic feelings of remorse, guilt, or grief being experienced. This negative approach prohibits and impedes considerably any possibility of inward unrest surfacing that will prompt members to consciously analyze collective actions of the past. Every means is exerted to paralyze serious reflection.

The non-spiritually based ethical framework is not designed to criticize itself. It only criticizes others. This paralyzing of reflection, accompanied by the subtle indoctrination of members of the dominant culture to never critically evaluate the framework, is what enables the dominant culture to engage daily in isolated or combinations of incongruent contradictory behaviors, actions, and decisions without remorse, guilt or internal unrest. The framework could not serve its purpose if members were permitted to constantly critique and challenge it. Constant critiquing of the framework by its members could lead to unpleasant discoveries, which in turn could initiate a dismantling of the framework. Evaluations must always be in the form of how to make the framework better. People outside the non-spiritually based ethical framework critiquing it carries hardly any significant weight.

Furthermore, there is no need for reflection or assessing the harm inflicted on others because the depth of the negative impacting results of pre-devised organized schemes of the dominant group are known by them before implementation. The duration of the effectiveness of every ploy is predetermined. Each scheme has an approximate expiration date. As a current ploy is diminishing in strength and effectiveness, moving toward its targeted expiration date, a newly completed scheme is being polished. The new stratagem is always implemented just as the activated ploy reaches its inability to be any longer effective. One scheme replaces another, though each one has the same scope and self-serving end.

The ethical framework is a human construct and is limited by finitude. Schemes are regularly implemented and have expirations dates because the base from which they surface is not a spiritual one. Plans that arise from a non-spiritual base have no lasting qualities or staying power.

There is a continuous beginning and ending of ruses, each replacing the old regulating device, but all are appropriate and satisfying to the interest of the dominant culture. In most cases, the negative impacts are so immense until immediate recovery by victims is impossible.

From their perspective, people of African descent in the United States have only been exposed to two major eras of American life that have been opened and closed. The two eras are slavery and legalized segregation. During both phases, racism was the order of the day. Racism is the single facet of American life that the majority of people of African descent are acutely acquainted. A person or people can

only talk intelligently about that with which they are acquainted. Their experience, which is their story, is the starting point for serious reflection.

When White people say that Black people talk too much about racism, it is the non-reflective component of the framework that breeds such a statement. Some writers discuss the concept of selective forgetting, 'a deep forgetting' or the luxury of ignorance on the part of White people in America, which has clouded their awareness of the realities of history.³⁶

There is not anything in the framework that assists or permits White people to think seriously for any meaningful length of time on the practice of using their power to enforce their prejudices about people of African descent. There is nothing in the framework that encourages the dominant culture to remember slavery or legalized segregation, as both institutions have served their purposes. In their dealings with people of African descent, serious reflection on the part of the dominant culture would demand that oppression be the starting point. The dominant culture has never reflected seriously on racism, as reflection may lead to a dismantling of the framework.

It is thinking that enjoys the truth and purifies the subjective consciousness.³⁷ Every spiritually based ethical framework provides opportunities for serious reflection on the actions of an individual, a race of people collectively, or a nation.

³⁶ Gary R. Howard, *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know, White Teachers, Multiracial Schools* (New York, New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 59.

³⁷ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures On The Philosophy*, 153.

Such reflection keeps people in contact with the realities of human existence, which is truth.

Only a non-spiritually based ethical framework denies the option and is devoid of such inwardly enhancing and enriching opportunities.

(5) When there are no built in opportunities for reflection, a person, people or society functions without any social or moral responsibility or accountability.

Because of the non-reflective dimension of their framework the dominant culture in America have functioned to a great degree without social or moral responsibility and accountability. This they have basically done since the arrival of Europeans in the New World, and it has been a normal, yet regrettable, twist in their legacy.

The Colonists enslaved Africans. Millions of Africans packed on ships too small for its human cargo died enroute to the New World. During slavery, slave parents and children were sold and separated from each other, and most never saw each other again in this life. Female slaves in some cases were reduced to the category of breeders, bringing forth sons and daughters for the express purpose of sales just as animals were bred to increase the stock, which in turn enlarged the bank accounts of slave owners. The Colonists did all of this and more to African slaves without social or moral responsibility or accountability. If there had been some social and moral responsibility and accountability, slavery would never have gained a footing in the land.

During slavery, the murder of slaves frequently was not addressed. Despite the efforts of the authorities and the courts, masters and overseers undoubtedly murdered more slaves than humanity will ever know. If the number did not reach

heights worthy of classification as statistically significant, it probably did loom large enough to strike terror into the quarters. It could happen. It sometimes did. The arrests, convictions, and punishment never remotely kept pace with the number of victims.³⁸

Moral responsibility and or accountability have been ignored by the dominant culture to a great degree in the world of scholarship. Recorded history has been overwhelmingly misrepresented and sometimes falsified. Intellectual integrity is in many cases rare and only certain truths are admitted. The truths that are admitted are the ones writers feel preserve and advance to the non-spiritually based ethical framework of the dominant culture.

Wyatt Tee Walker asserts that Western historians are the chief scoundrels of racism. A calculated and premeditated distortion of history has been a dominant corrupting influence that strengthened racism.³⁹

The Civil War is a good illustration in the world of scholarship of scholars from the dominant culture functioning largely without moral responsibility or accountability. It has been widely taught that the Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves, their liberation was a humane gesture and the war was fought to make the liberty of the slaves a reality. The evidence points to the contrary.

Mr. Lincoln had no intentions of liberating slaves. He stated repeatedly that his opposition was to the expansion of slavery into the territories, but in States where

³⁸ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 39.

³⁹ Wyatt Tee Walker, *The Soul Of Black Worship* (New York, New York: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1984), 8.

the institution already existed the Chief Executive nor the Federal Government would or should interfere. The Union fought the Civil War not to eradicate the country of the evil of the institution of slavery, but to prevent the expansion of the institution.

That Mr. Lincoln did not intend to liberate the slaves at the commencement of the war is obvious from military communications. Florida was one of the States in rebellion against the Union. Several weeks before the war started slaves in Florida arrived at a Federal military post. These slaves wrongly concluded that White Federal soldiers were posted in Florida to liberate them. First Lieutenant A. J. Slemmer, Fort Pickens, Florida informs his superior, Lieutenant Colonel L. Thomas, Assistant Adjutant General, United States Army on 18 March 1861 of the slaves erroneous assumption and recent actions he had taken. First Lieutenant Slemmer explains: "On the morning of the 12th instant four negroes (runaways) came to the fort entertaining the idea that we were placed here to protect them and grant them their freedom. I did what I could to teach them the contrary. In the afternoon I took them to Pensacola and delivered them to the city marshal to be returned to their owners. That same night four more made their appearance. They were also turned over to the authorities...."⁴⁰

Slaves in the loyal State of Maryland erroneously concluded that their liberation was an objective of the Federal Government. Maryland slaves were prepared to stage an uprising to aid in facilitating their liberation. Major General Butler assured White Maryland residents and the Governor on 23 April 1863 that the liberation of slaves was not a Union objective: "I have understood within the last hour

⁴⁰ *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series 2, vol. 1 (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: National Historical Society, 1985), 750.

that some apprehensions were entertained of an insurrection of the negro population of this neighborhood. I am anxious to convince all classes of persons that the forces under my command are not here in any way to interfere with or countenance any interference with the laws of the State. I am therefore ready to co-operate with your excellency in suppressing most promptly and effectively any insurrection against the laws of Maryland.”⁴¹

White residents in Western Virginia were reassured by General McClellan on 26 May 1861 that the Federal Government had no intentions of interfering with the institution of slavery and that their slaves and other property were safe, as the Union was fighting to contain slavery in States where it already existed and prevent the spread of the institution: “I have ordered troops to cross the river. They come as your friends and brothers--as enemies only to the armed rebels who are preying upon you. Your homes, your families and your property are safe under our protection. All your rights shall be religiously respected.” The general goes on to say:

“Notwithstanding all that has been said by the traitors to induce you to believe that our advent among you will be signalized by interference with your slaves understand one thing clearly--not only will we abstain from all such interference but we will on the contrary with an iron hand crush any attempt at insurrection on their part.”⁴²

As the war continued and the Union was unable to subdue the Confederates, some of Mr. Lincoln’s generals explained to him that the rebels were sustaining the

⁴¹ Ibid., 750.

⁴² Ibid., 753.

conflict with slave labor. The Union military discovered that slaves were being used to build ships, erect batteries, cook in rebel camps and perform a host of other non-combatant duties. Slave owners were renting this species of property to the Confederate military. A select group of military leaders further explained to Mr. Lincoln that if he were to liberate the slaves in insurrectionary States and remove from the Confederate military this vital resource upon which they depended the war would soon end.

Several Federal generals also proposed to Mr. Lincoln that he enlist the emancipated slaves in the Union Army so they could fight and defeat their former masters, explaining that the enlistment of the liberated slaves would provide the Federal military with additional soldiers.

The Emancipation Proclamation was drafted due to military necessity rather than purely human considerations. The liberation of the slave population in insurrectionary States on 1 January 1863 was a pragmatic military strategy and was not based on moral human principles. It was only after this practical measure was taken and became effective that White people began to say the time to rid the country of the evil had come and the abolishment of the institution should become part of the war effort. This view, however, was not the motivating notion at the commencement of the conflict.⁴³

As the war continued, the Chief Executive never hinted or stated publicly or privately that the war was initiated to liberate the slaves. Mr. Lincoln explains to Mr.

⁴³ Wally G. Vaughn, *The Two Purposes of the Emancipation Proclamation* (Publisher is being sought. Source for this research was *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*).

A. G. Hodges in April 1864 that the liberation of the slaves was due to military necessity: "When, early in the war, General Fremont attempted military emancipation, I forbade it, because I did not then think it an indispensable necessity. When a little later, General Cameron, then Secretary of War, suggested the arming of the blacks, I objected, because I did not yet think it an indispensable necessity. When, still later, General Hunter attempted military emancipation, I again forbade it, because I did not yet think the indispensable necessity had come. When, in March, and May, and July 1862," the President continues, "I made earnest, and successive appeals to the border states to favor compensated emancipation, I believed the indispensable necessity for military emancipation, and arming the blacks would come, unless averted by that measure. They declined the proposition; and I was, in my best judgment, driven to the alternative of either surrendering the Union, and with it, the Constitution, or of laying strong hand upon the colored element. I chose the latter."⁴⁴

Mr. Lincoln tells Mr. Charles D. Robinson in August 1864 that the liberation of the slaves had more to do with military necessity than with any other consideration:

It is true, as you remind me, that in the Greeley letter of 1862, I said: "If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some, and leaving others alone I would also do that." I continued in the same letter as follows: "What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause;

⁴⁴ Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 7 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 281-282.

and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. All this I said in the utmost sincerity; and I am as true to the whole of it now, as when I first said it. When I afterwards proclaimed emancipation, and employed colored soldiers, I only followed the declaration just quoted from the Greeley letter that "I shall do *more* whenever I shall believe doing *more* will help the cause." The way these measures were to help the cause, was not to be by magic, or miracles, but by inducing the colored people to come bodily over from the rebel side to ours.⁴⁵

The integration of the military services of the United States in the late 1940s has been misrepresented. Commentators and writers frequently point out that the military was the first institution to integrate. The integration story is usually presented with a positive moral flavor. However, the integration of the military was instituted for pragmatic reasons, as oppose to moral reasons. Military units could fight better and the possibility of victories greatly enhanced with soldiers fighting together than unequally separated.⁴⁶

The dominant culture functioned without social or moral responsibility and accountability during segregation in the areas of justice, education, and economics.

Black men were lynched. Lynchings had many of the characteristics of a sporting event. Entire families including children, participated. Families packed food, drink and spirits for the event. These mobs sometimes included police officers, which gathered to take part in the hanging, burning or shooting. The murderous

⁴⁵ Ibid., 499-500.

⁴⁶ Historian Alan L. Gropman, PhD., made this point in June 2001 at a gathering of Chaplains on the grounds of Hampton University.

assault ceremoniously concluded with White people parceling out the remains of the Black victim. Teeth and other body parts were collected as souvenirs.⁴⁷

In November 1898 a corrupt election transformed Wilmington, North Carolina. Ballot boxes were stuffed, and voters of African descent were kept away from the polls by patrols of armed White men. As a result, the city's racially integrated government was replaced by a new White supremacist regime. Forty-eight hours later, the city erupted in violence. Apparently unsatisfied with their overwhelming victory, a White mob stormed the offices of a local Black owned newspaper and set them on fire. After the newspaper building burned to the ground, organized patrols of armed White men took over the public spaces of the city. They stopped any person of African descent found, searched them for weapons, and ordered them off the streets. Some tried to resist, but were massively outgunned by a White horde armed with nearly two thousand Winchester rifles and a new rapid-fire machine gun mounted on a cart to patrol the "Negro quarters of the city." As the violence intensified, many families of African descent fled to the surrounding swamps, where they hid for several days before returning to a radically altered city.⁴⁸

As late as the 1950s people of African descent could not park their cars or trucks in front of the courthouse in Camden, Alabama. However, White people could park in front of the courthouse.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Kathryn K. Russell, *The Color of Crime*, 21.

⁴⁸ "Bryan Wagner, Charles Chesnutt and the Epistemology of Racial Violence", *American Literature*, vol. 73, no. 2, June 2001, 311.

⁴⁹ Wally G. Vaughn, *The Selma Campaign 1963 - 1965* (Dover, Massachusetts: The Majority Press, Inc. 2002), see the story of Reverend Frederick D. Reese.

There was never a question whether the city dump, the rail road tracks for importing goods into town by train, and all other unwanted community blights would be put on the White side of town and the side of town where people of African lineage resided.

Nearly every person of African descent in America upward of forty-five or fifty years of age can recount two or three stories about people of African heritage being seriously taken advantage of by White people or a White person and the families and friends of the victims had no system to which they could appeal. Thousands and thousands of grieving family members and communities comprised of people of African heritage live daily with these traumatic episodes rushing into their minds repeatedly. What troubles them most decades after these events is that nothing was ever done and no person or persons were held accountable. Only God heard the cries of friends and families.

All across the segregated South, the taxes of Black people were taken and spent for the education and development of White children. Only a small amount was spent for the education of children of African heritage.

Tax dollars were used to erect local libraries, but children of African descent were prohibited from using the facilities.

At segregated schools children of African lineage received used outdated textbook from White schools in the same community, after White children were issued new books with updated material and the most recent discoveries and current information. This practice insured children of African heritage were never exposed to current information in the academic environment.

White landowners sometimes told sharecroppers of African descent in many communities after the harvest season that they would not be paid. White landowners kept all of the profits. Often Black sharecroppers were paid a fraction of the true earnings from the crops. In most cases, Black sharecroppers had no court or system with which to register concerns and grievances and had to suffer the economic losses.

The list of actions could be expanded, but the point is made, as thousands of volumes could be written about members of the dominant culture acting without any moral responsibility or accountability toward people of African heritage during the era of segregation.

The non-spiritually based ethical framework appears to only require social and moral accountability and responsibility on the part of White people when an offense has been committed against another White person.

As the non-spiritually based ethical framework can never be systematically and regularly seriously reflected upon, the lack of social and moral accountability and responsibility among the dominant culture toward people of African heritage to a considerable degree has been preserved. How? There is a factor in the framework that allows for the inauguration of one of three responses when acts are committed. Acts are rationally explained, usually to the satisfaction of the framework, the one or ones who committed the offense are exonerated or their actions are completely excused.

The third unique feature of the non-spiritually based ethical framework is that it is inherently weak. The dominant culture's need to enforce its biases about the less

dominant group in order to control them, so that the dominant culture can maintain its status, is the primary sign of inherent weakness.

The non-spiritually based ethical framework is inherently weak because it is a human construct and it limited by finitude. The inherent weakness of the framework demands the colossal orchestration of contrived outcomes in order to have the appearance of strength.

The dominant culture must set in place processes of manipulation, which equate to dehumanizing tactics, in order to sustain their pre-conceived biases about the group they seek to control. Without some process of exploitation, the double-standard being the hallmark act utilized, the group being controlled would ascend to the level of the controlling group and possibly surpass them because they, the group being controlled, would face no prescribed impediments to their progress and development.

The possibility of the group being controlled ascending to an equal level or even surpassing the controlling group is feared most by the dominant culture, and this risk cannot be taken.

Fear drives the dominant culture to engage in acts and designs to make sure their moral values dominate over the values of others so that they should be the guide and judge not only in life, but also of knowledge, the arts, political, and social endeavors. Everything serves as a means to preserving and advancing the non-spiritually based ethical framework or is seen as a disturbance, hindrance, or danger and consequently must be combated, even to the point of annihilation should that be required. This portion of the non-spiritually based ethical framework is based on

what is useful to the herd. The strong and independent are a threat to the herd. The more threatening a quality or a people seem to the herd, the more thoroughly is it proscribed.⁵⁰

All opportunities that can potentially contribute to the elevation of the group being controlled to an equal level and possibly pass the dominant culture must be denied. For that reason, well-designed, though fallible, schemes that support wholesale systematic institutionalized oppression and racism are implemented to disguise and shelter the inherent weakness of the non-spiritually based ethical framework.

This inherent weakness in the non-spiritually based ethical framework of the dominant culture has a component that can be described as survival ethics.

Survival ethics can be gracefully camouflaged through a variety of political, social and religious displays, but underneath it is calculating and crushing. The dominant group in America has cleverly fashioned an environment that has the appearance of a people who are living a prosperous authentic orderly life. However, their aim is to survive, as oppose to engage in authentic existence. Survival for the dominant group is tantamount to maintaining control over all less dominant groups in the land about whom they have prejudices and those biases are being enforced. This concept and way of life, which is inauthentic existence, controls the political, economic, religious and social patterns of the dominant group in America, thus

⁵⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will To Power*, 156-157. (The concept I am developing is not one with which Nietzsche would necessarily agree. Nietzsche, as many scholars have pointed out, was not a systematic thinker. I have used this portion of his work to assist in elucidating my point. I am not a Nietzsche disciple.)

controlling the dominant group.

The inherent weakness of the framework is of such nature that White people are harmed and deformed when practical or necessary. This was done often during the era of segregation.

Howard Thurman, who lived during the period of segregation, was one thinker, if not the only thinker, who outlined in a systematic manner the sad saga of the dominant culture harming and deforming their own when required for the good of the framework.

The mystical Thurman points out that the non-spiritually based ethical framework of segregationists was a double edge sword that cut and wounded both victims and the handlers of the weapon. In order to keep the status of people of African heritage frozen, many things had to be done within the White society, which limited its development and hampered its enrichment. When a new law for the common good was being considered, before the merits of the law itself could be examined, there was a previous consideration that had to be taken into account: what bearing would the new law have on the connection between White people and people of African descent? A way was always found that would provide maximum benefit to the White community and minimum benefit to the community comprised of people of African lineage. The touchstone was not to disturb the fixed status while at the same time to develop increased freedom for growth and development within the

White community.⁵¹

However, by shaping laws to restrict people of African ancestry, White people automatically restricted and limited their own potential benefits, as well as that of their children. White people could not design the harm of people of African extraction without harming themselves. They consciously limited their growth and development, however slight, and that of future generations of their race in order to limit to a greater degree the development of people of African stock. There is something solidly unappealing and uninspiring about an ethical framework that allowed a race of people to consciously design its own hurt, with the understanding that this had to be done in order to harm another race of people to an even greater extent.

The field of education is another area wherein White people have deformed members of their own race, while attempting to damage students of African descent. In the educational arena, the history, contributions and life of people of African descent in America are conspicuously absent.

The absence of African American knowledge in many school curricula in the United States is not a simple oversight. Its absence represents an academic instance of racism, or in Houston Baker's apt phrase, "willful ignorance and aggression toward Blacks."⁵²

While this practice is intended to cripple people of African descent, it is also

⁵¹ Howard Thurman, *The Luminous Darkness: A Personal Interpretation of the Anatomy of Segregation and the Ground of Hope* (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1989), 6-8.

⁵² Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow, editors, *Race Identity And Representation In Education*, William F. Pinar Notes on Understanding Curriculum As A Racial Text (New York, New York: Routledge, 1993), 62.

damaging to White students. “We are what we know. We are, however, also what we do not know. If what we know about ourselves- our history, our culture, our national identity- is deformed by absences, denials, and incompleteness, then our identity- both as individuals and as Americans- is fragmented. This fragmented self is a repressed self, that is, it contains repressed elements,” writes William F. Pinar. “Such a self lacks access both to itself and to the world. Repressed, the self’s capacity for intelligence, for informed action, even for simple functional competence is impaired. Its sense of history, gender, and politics is incomplete and distorted.”⁵³

A society that intentionally fragments itself in this fashion cannot engage in authentic existence. Wholeness or at least the desire to be made whole leads to authentic existence.

The idea of the dominant culture harming and deforming its members when necessary to harm people of African descent to a greater extent suggest that their non-relational ethics, which is non-spiritually based, is practiced in all settings.

Another act that reveals the inherent weakness of the non-spiritually based ethical framework is the need to teach members to think White, as oppose to thinking right, as the Bible teaches. Members are trained and indoctrinated to make decisions based on what is best for the framework and its preservation. One can avoid any and all struggles of wrestling with what is right by simply thinking White, as the framework has already determined its own righteousness.

⁵³ Ibid., 61.

This is what people of African descent have reference to when they say, and never as a compliment —“If you are White, you are right.” They do not mean right in the biblical or moral sense. They mean right in the sense that the framework and its members have fashioned a righteousness of their own.

This self-righteousness or White norm, which is tantamount to inauthentic existence, is required; otherwise the framework would crumble, when put up against the pure righteousness revealed in the life, death and resurrection of the Jesus the Christ and the teachings of the Christian faith.

Inauthentic existence is contrary to the will of God. When a people live in a manner that the outcomes they experience most often contrived and these endings are counted as authentic results, they are living in way that merely seems right. Contrived conclusions suggest a person or people do not love the Creator enough to put their full trust in this all wise Infinite Being to secure the most godly outcome for them.

There is no bona fide existence apart from the loving Creator, only fear. According to I John 4:18, “there is no fear in love but perfect love casts out fear”. The Creator does not endorse contrived outcomes for any portion of humanity because engineered endings connote an inauthentic existence and no reliance on the Creator. The Creator has called all humanity to authentic existence.

The ethical framework that informs the decision making process of the earliest Africans brought to the New World, and the ethical framework that informs the decision making process of their descendants, has three unique features. The unique features are: the framework is spiritually based, meaning it is relational, the ethical framework is unselfish, and the ethical framework is inherently strong.

The first unique feature of the ethical framework of the slave community and its descendants is that it is spiritually based.

A spiritually based ethical framework labors unceasingly to reshape a community or society that is dominated by a non-spiritually based ethical framework, rather than surrender to it.

Africans had been exposed to some form of bondage before entering the New World. Long before the ships of Europe arrived, there was a form of human bondage in Africa, just as there was on most of the world's continents. There is no evidence, however, that the kind of chattel slavery which Europe was to perfect in the New World had taken root in West Africa. As far as slavery goes, the slavery to which Africans were exposed on their continent was far more humane, often lasting for prescribed periods of time, and involving no laws aimed at dehumanization. This slavery was not established by the Africans primarily for profit; it did not impose on the victims a mark of essential, intrinsic inferiority; and it was not necessarily passed on to the children of the bondsmen.⁵⁴

The type of oppression that was being introduced and perfected in the Colonies was taking human slavery to a new unknown low level of degradation. This new form of oppression was to be systematic, institutionalized, and racist, with displays of cruelty and bestiality never witnessed in the entire known world.

⁵⁴ Vincent Harding, *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers 1981), 6.

Africans had no idea of the horrors to which their kinsmen were being exposed in the New World nor a clue as to the lucrative evil that was afoot on the other side of the Atlantic involving Africans.

African slavery in America became the first systematic racist institution established by the non-spiritually based ethical framework of the dominant society in America and Africans were the victims. White Colonists had prejudice plus the power to enforce their biases about Africans.

It was easy for Africans to determine that the ethics of their oppressor was not spiritual in nature. The slave community realized that there was a non-spiritually based ethical framework employed by the Colonists that differentiated between Africans and people of European descent. The Colonists racist double standard was apparent.

The slaves did not endorse the non-spiritually based institution of slavery, whose hallmark was a double standard between Africans and Europeans. Their spiritually based ethical framework inspired slaves to always, where practical and possible, labor to first dismantle the non-spiritually based ethical framework that oppressed them and secondly avoid yielding and being swallowed up by it. These were primary objectives for the earliest element of the slave community.

There are three watershed junctures in American history where the spiritually based ethical framework of Africans and people of African heritage secured unusual positive miraculous results that the non-spiritually based ethical framework of the oppressor could not withstand.

The first water-shed period during which the spiritually based ethical framework of the African community achieved positive miraculous results that the non-spiritually based ethical framework of the oppressor could not withstand was from the early part of the seventeenth century until around 1861. During this period, slaves relied greatly on their African spiritual base to assist them in not being swallowed up by the non-spiritually based ethical framework of the dominant culture in the New World.

The brutality and psychological damage inflicted on people of African heritage from the first half of the seventeenth century to about 1861 should have shortened the lives of slaves in general. As a result of their experience, the slaves who lived long lives should, as a group, have been insane. Instead, history documents the longevity of slave life and their overall calmness of spirit throughout that horrific experience known as American slavery.

That the slaves lived through the Colonial Period and the early years of nationhood up to commencement of the Civil War without being completely destroyed or yielding to the non-spiritually based ethical framework of the dominant culture is the greatest evidence that their objectives were achieved. These objectives were achieved only as a result of the spiritually based ethical framework that informed their decision making process.

The second watershed period during which the spiritually based ethical framework of the African community achieved positive miraculous results that the non-spiritually based ethical framework of the oppressor could not withstand was during the Civil War, which lasted from 1861 to 1865. During this period the large

slave community, accompanied by an element of free people of African descent, sought to reshape the racist environment in which they lived to the end that they and their descendants would not be swallowed up by the non-spiritually based ethical framework of their oppressor.

The male slave population and free men of African descent were the only elements among the Union's fighting force that entered the Civil War on purely moral ground with the objective of abolishing chattel slavery, which was synonymous with reshaping the non-spiritually based oppressive environment wherein they lived.

Mr. Lincoln made it clear at the outset of the war that the United States had two objectives. They were to preserve the Union and the Constitution, and contain slavery to States where it already existed, preventing the spread of the evil. Reshaping the oppressive environment by abolishing the institution of slavery was not an objective.

Slaves initially misunderstood the position of the Union, erroneously concluding that the war was being waged to liberate them. Upon learning Mr. Lincoln's true objectives, the slaves began re-evaluating the situation.

After the war had been in progress for six or eight weeks, the Union discovered that the Confederate military was employing slaves to erect batteries and forts, build ships, and engage in a host of other non-combatant duties. The Confederate Government paid slave masters a rental fee for the use of their slave property.

When General Benjamin Butler learned of this in late May 1862 from runaway slaves in Virginia who came to the Federal post under his command, he

communicated it to his superior Lieutenant General Winfield Scott. Lieutenant General Scott gave the information to the United States Secretary of War, Mr. Simon Cameron ⁵⁵

Federal generals such as General David Saxton, J. W. Phelps and others were of the opinion that Mr. Lincoln should liberate the slaves in States that were in rebellion, thus removing from the Confederate military a vital resource upon which it depended. Following their liberation, the generals believed the slaves should be enlisted in the Federal Army to assist in defeating their former masters. Mr. Lincoln was opposed to this proposition because he did not want to interfere with the institution of slavery. As the Union prosecution of the war failed to meet with unblemished approval, in September 1862 Mr. Lincoln reluctantly issued the Emancipation Proclamation. The document informed the Confederate States of America that should they fail to put down their weapons by 1 January 1863 and return to the Union their slave property would be freed.

The rebels continued their rebellion against the Union. On 1 January 1863 the Emancipation Proclamation became effective. Slaves began to leave plantations.

By the close of the first quarter of 1863 Mr. Lincoln was convinced that male slaves in the heartland of the rebellion was an element of force that could strengthen the Union's military capability. Three communications substantiate this view.

Mr. Lincoln writes to Andrew Johnson on 26 March 1863: "I am told you have at least *thought* of raising a negro military force. In my opinion the country now

⁵⁵ *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, vol. 2, 648-652.

needs no specific thing so much as some man of your ability, and position, to go to this work. When I speak of your position, I mean that of an eminent citizen of a slave-state, and himself a slave-holder.” Mr. Lincoln continues: “The colored population is the great *available* and yet *unavailed of*, force for restoring the Union. The bare sight of fifty thousand armed, and drilled black soldiers on the banks of the Mississippi, would end the rebellion at once. And who doubts that we can present that sight, if we but take hold in earnest? If you have been thinking of it please do not dismiss the thought.”⁵⁶

President Lincoln communicated with General Banks, who was in Louisiana, instructing him to support the Union’s plan to enlist male slaves in the Federal Army and assist in bringing this element of force into the ranks. He writes on 29 March 1863: “Hon. Daniel Ullmann, with a commission of Brigadier General, and two or three hundred other gentlemen of officers, goes to your department and reports to you, for the purpose of raising a colored brigade. To now avail ourselves of this element of force, is very important, if not indispensable. I therefore will thank you to help General Ullmann forward with this undertaking, as much, and as rapidly, as you can;” the Chief Executive continues “and also to carry the general object beyond his particular organization if you find it practicable. The necessity of this is palpable if, as I understand, you are now unable to effect anything with your present force; and which force is soon to be greatly diminished by the expiration of terms of service, as

⁵⁶ Roy P. Basler, *The Collected Works*, vol. 6, 149-150.

well as by ordinary causes. I shall be very glad if you will take hold of the matter in earnest.⁵⁷

Mr. Lincoln expressed the same to General Grant on 9 August 1863 saying: "... General Thomas has gone again to the Mississippi Valley, with the view of raising colored troops....I believe it is a resource which, if vigorously applied now, will soon close the contest. It works doubly, weakening the enemy and strengthening us. We were not fully ripe for it until the river was opened. Now, I think at least a hundred thousand can, and ought to be rapidly organized along it's shores, relieving all the white troops to serve elsewhere."⁵⁸

By the second half of 1864, it was apparent that the Union would be victorious. From Mr. Lincoln's view, the slave population was proving to be the pivotal force in the Civil War to save the Union.

That the Union could not have been so close to victory at this stage of the war without the participation of the slave population is confirmed by Mr. Lincoln's remarks to Mr. A. G. Hodges in a 4 April letter: Speaking of the one hundred and thirty thousand soldiers, seamen and laborers of African descent, slaves primarily, assisting the Union and White men who were not reconciled to this fact, the President says: "And now let any Union man who complains of the measure, test himself by writing down in one line that he is for subduing the rebellion by force of arms; and in the next, that he is for taking these hundred and thirty thousand men from the Union

⁵⁷ Ibid., 154.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 374.

side, and placing them where they would be but for the measure he condemns. If he can not face his case so stated, it is only because he can not face the truth.”⁵⁹

Mr. Lincoln made it clear that he understood that the slaves were fighting in exchange for freedom, as they were seeking to liberate themselves and eradicate the evil of slavery, thus reshaping the oppressive environment that had been shaped by a non-spiritually based ethical framework. He writes to Mr. Charles Robinson on 17 August 1864:

...On this point, nearly a year ago, in a letter to Mr. Conkling, made public at once, I wrote as follows “But negroes, like other people, act upon motives. Why should they do anything for us if we will do nothing for them? If they stake their lives for us they must be prompted by the strongest motive—even the promise of freedom. And the promise, being made, must be kept.” I am sure you will not, on due reflection, say that the promise being made, must be *broken* at the first opportunity. I am sure you would not desire me to say, or to leave an inference, that I am ready, whenever convenient, to join in re-enslaving those who shall have served us in consideration of our promise. As matter of morals, could such treachery by any possibility, escape the curses of Heaven, or of any good man? As matter of policy, to *announce* such a purpose, would ruin the Union cause itself. All recruiting of colored men would instantly cease, and all colored men now in our service, would instantly desert us. And rightfully too. Why should they give their lives for us, with full notice of our purpose to betray them.”⁶⁰

If Mr. Robinson had any doubt as to the significant role male slaves were occupying in the Union Army, Mr. Lincoln closes his letter: “Take from us, and give to the enemy, the hundred and thirty, forty, or fifty thousand colored persons now

⁵⁹ Ibid., vol. 7, 281-282.

⁶⁰ Ibid., vol. 7, 500.

serving us as soldiers, seamen, and laborers, and we can not longer maintain the contest.”⁶¹

Male slaves and people of African heritage in general brought victory, saved the Union, liberated themselves and made a giant leap toward reshaping the non-spiritually based oppressive society in which they lived.

The third significant period in American history where the ethical framework of people of African descent reaped miraculous results against which the non-spiritually based ethical framework of the oppressor could not withstand was during the era of The Movement. This era lasted from the late 1940s until about 1970.

The primary objective of people of African descent during The Movement was to break and melt down the fixed and frozen status that the system of segregation intended for them, and reshape the oppressive environment in which they lived.

Segregation, as Howard Thurman remind readers through out his works in which he examines the subject, was a complete ethical and moral evil. Whatever it may have done for people who dwelt on either side of the wall, one thing was certain: segregation poisoned all normal contacts of the people involved.

The earliest formal organized event that evolved into what was called The Movement started in Clarendon County, South Carolina in the late 1930 and reached its climax around 1946.

The initiative taken by the mostly illiterate Black farmers and their families in Clarendon County around 1946 had nothing to do with civil rights or South Carolina State laws. The underlying motive behind the action of these rural dwellers was

⁶¹ Ibid.

ethical and moral. Their labors represented an ethical response that was intended to reshape the oppressive non-spiritually based environment in which they found themselves. Their aim was to establish an acceptable degree of justice and equality, for which their relational ethical framework informed them that there was no substitute.

The first issue relating to the school system in Clarendon County, South Carolina had to do with bus transportation. White students in Clarendon County were provided school buses. Students of African heritage walked to school. Some students walked up to seven or eight miles one way from Davis Station to Summerton. This double standard was the norm. This blatant unethical practice was troubling to many Black residents.

The all White school board was asked to provide a school bus so that the children of tax paying citizens of African descent could ride to Scotts Branch High School in Summerton, South Carolina. The school board declined. Mr. Levi Pearson encouraged Black adults in the Davis Station area of the county to purchase a school bus. The community pooled their finances and purchased an old run-down worn out bus that the White community had already discarded. After purchasing the bus, the school board was asked to provide a driver and gas. Again, the school board declined. Following this episode, the spiritually based ethical framework of residents of African lineage informed them that they needed to address this moral/ethical issue in a broader forum. Ultimately twenty or twenty-one Black parents signed a petition and a court case was filed seeking equal bus transportation. Ethical considerations were driving the school bus issue. Whether there were legal statutes that supported

the unethical practices was beside the point in the minds of Reverend DeLaine, who was the local leader, and his supporters.

The display of resolve of these Clarendon County residents was one of the earliest public formal acts on the part of people of African heritage in the southern United States during the twentieth century that evolved into what was called The Movement.

Clarendon County residents did not give their engagement to reshape the oppressive racist environment in which they found themselves a formal name or title. The violation of civil rights was not the issue for them. The issue was right and wrong, ethical concerns.

“How long do you all think it will take to secure your civil rights?”

Had a sociologist, legal expert, or news reporter asked the semi-illiterate farmers of African descent in Clarendon County, South Carolina this question during the latter part of the 1940s, the inquirer would have gotten a strange stare.

“Do you all think the way Negro citizens in Clarendon County are treated and the double standards regarding the laws and customs are wrong?”

This question would have gotten a positive verbal response. The people whose spiritually based ethical framework was motivating them to reshape the environment would have said the way in which they were being treated and the legal statutes that had been enacted to restrict them were morally wrong in God’s sight, and in the sight of any one who had love in their heart and a passion for justice, freedom, truth and righteousness. The ethical dimension meant more to Clarendon County residents of African heritage than did legal considerations. They were seeking to

bring moral and ethical integrity to their community, and in so doing would bring a degree of legal integrity. The laws that oppressed them were legal, but these residents considered them unethical.

Mrs. Lurena Richardson Cochran, whose mother, Mrs. Lucrisher Richardson signed the petition, says regarding the actions of her mother and the other signatories:

“They understood right and wrong.”⁶²

People of African descent in Clarendon County knew what was being perpetrated upon them was morally unsound and that their struggle was an ethical and moral encounter.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott, which commenced in December 1955, was about something far loftier, compellingly greater and more morally significant than getting laws changed so Black citizens could sit at the front of the bus. The bus issue and the segregated seating arrangement was just one of many ethical concerns for Montgomerians of African heritage.

Insulting and abusive laws restricted where people could go and what they could do based on skin color. The bus issue was merely a giant step toward addressing a huge immoral degrading way of life that was fashioned by a non-spiritually based ethical framework that affected the life of each person of African descent in Montgomery, regardless of their age, sex, vocation or educational background. The ultimate aim was not just to be able to sit wherever one wanted to on a city bus. The ultimate aim was, from a spiritual perspective, to reshape a local

⁶² Joseph A. DeLaine, Jr. took this researcher to Columbia, South Carolina to interview Mrs. Lurena Richardson Cochran in March 2001.

society so that all people therein could live in dignity and harmony as the great Creator commanded, whether they were riding the bus or walking.

Individuals who were members of Dexter Avenue Baptist during the years Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. was the pastor, 1954 – 1960, and supported him as a local leader granted personal interviews to this researcher between 1993 and 1995. Many of them spoke of and specifically referred to the work in which they and their pastor were involved as The Movement.⁶³

The zenith of The Selma Campaign, which took place in Selma, Alabama, was prosecuted from 1963 to 1965 and was described as the fight for the heart of America. Reverend Fredrick Douglass Reese was the local leader. Adult residents of African lineage in Dallas County, where Selma is located, wanted to exercise their right to vote. This right was withheld from them. However, participating in the political process was not the sole under girding issue in Dallas County. Voting, which affected all Dallas County residents of African background regardless of their age, sex, economic or educational standing, was only the tip of the iceberg and the single event around which members of the race could be rallied.

In their struggle, people of African heritage in Dallas County were laboring to dismantle the non-spiritually based unethical systematic institutionalized way of life that minimized their intellectual and economic development, as well as kept them out

⁶³ Wally G. Vaughn, Sr., editor and Richard Wills, assistant editor, *Reflections On Our Pastor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1954 – 1960* (Dover, Massachusetts: The Majority Press, Inc., 1999), 7-9, 13, 17, 40, 42, 45, 47- 48, 53 –54, 60 – 61, 66, 68, 71-72, 74, 87, 91, 97-99, 107, 110-112, 122, 124, 127, 131, 145, 147, 150, 157.

of the political process. Their goal was to reshape the environment. Voting was the immediate concern around which all Black adults could rally.

In personal interviews with this researcher, senior residents in Selma of African heritage who participated in the Selma Campaign at its zenith frequently referred to their participation in The Movement.⁶⁴

What was happening in Clarendon County, South Carolina, Montgomery, Alabama, Birmingham, Alabama and other areas was referred to as The Movement because the people only knew that something transformative was occurring and it was moving across the land.

The phrase Civil Rights Era, which is used by many scholars and media personnel, is a late development and is misleading and inaccurate from the perspective of people of African descent. Civil Rights was not at the root of the explosion that occurred among people of African heritage in America beginning in the mid 1940s in Clarendon County, South Carolina under the leadership of Reverend Joseph A. DeLaine, Sr. and moved across the land.

The Movement in the United States was not a racial event, as many have described it. Upwards of ninety percent of the participants were people of African descent. However, the real underlying issue for Reverend Joseph A. DeLaine, Sr., Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Reverend F. D. Reese and others during The

⁶⁴ My research in Selma will be released in early 2002 in a book entitled *The Selma Campaign 1963 – 1965* Dover, Massachusetts: The Majority Press, Inc. For references to The Movement, see individual first person accounts in the section entitled Recollections From Selma Residents.

Movement was racism, and racist practices, which emerged from a non-spiritually based ethical framework. To condemn racism was in affect to condemn the ethical framework from which it emerged.

People of African heritage were not fighting against flesh and blood during The Movement. It was a battle of the spiritual against the non-spiritual, the ethical against the unethical, and the moral against the immoral. The premiere leaders in local communities were either Christian ministers or men and women of strong Christian faith.

As The Movement progressed, its spiritual core attracted leaders and people from other religious faith groups such as Jews, Muslims, as well as White people from various Christian denominations, who became aligned with the work. The spiritual perspective of The Movement transcended religious differences, traditions and customs.

All meaningful faith groups believe in the divinely ordained privileges of freedom, justice, human dignity and worth. Mass media publicized The Movement extensively. It was upon witnessing the documented systematic flagrant abuses and denial of these eternal concepts in the lives of the darker hue of God's creation in the Southern part of the United States that people from other faith groups that honored these same divine concepts could not hold their peace.

The primary objective of The Movement was not simply to change legal statutes and civil laws, which would have been the goal of a Civil Rights crusade. Participants in The Movement were crusading for moral change and ethical enlightenment, and were determined to reshape the crippling, evil environment

fashioned by segregationists. The crusaders of color were seeking to move the country from a non-relational to a relational environment.

The unprecedented twentieth century spiritually based offensive launched by people of African descent in the United States in the late 1940s and continued to the late 1960s disrupted the system of segregation to the foundation, leading to a reshaping of American society. The Bible, not the Constitution of the United States, inspired the spiritually based event known as The Movement.

The second feature of the spiritually based ethical framework of the slave community and its descendants is its quality of unselfishness. Because it is unselfish this spiritually based ethical framework has sustaining features that are the opposite of the non-spiritually based ethical framework of the dominant society.

The ethical framework that shaped and informed the slave community was unselfish. It was not an ethical system intended to establish a double standard. A people whose ethical framework has the component of compassion will reject a double standard.

The hallmark of the ethical framework of the slave community was love. Numerous scholars have highlighted this dimension of life among the slaves.

Eugene Genovese highlights the compassionate side of the slave community.⁶⁵

Ronald G. Walters makes a similar claim. The question was posed during the height of the abolitionists struggle some wondered why if people of African heritage truly desired freedom, so few of them rebelled. "The negro's heart, spite of all the

⁶⁵ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 204.

maddening influence of oppression, is too kind, too full of tenderness and love,” was A. A. Phelps’s answer. “The white man might seek vengeance, but not he.”⁶⁶

People of African heritage were viewed as forgiving, gentle, and unvindictive. It was hard for abolitionists to turn slaves into a vengeful but liberty-loving Anglo-Saxon. Some White associated people of African descent with a special religiosity. Others shifted from believing in the gentleness of Africans to identifying them with the Redeemer, and finally to depicting slaves as agents of redemption.⁶⁷

The spiritual roots of the African community in the New World informed them of the equality of all human beings, regardless of the continent from which they originated. The seal of the spiritually based ethical framework of contemporary people of African descent is love.

It was highlighted earlier that slaves enlisted in the Union Army to fight in exchange for their freedom and the abolishment of slavery. Their efforts were unselfish. While they desired their freedom, slaves fought to destroy the system of institutionalized slavery in America anticipating it would never rise again and be imposed on people of African descent or any other race. Slaves fighting to abolish the institution looked beyond their own immediate condition and envisioned a new order and richer society in the United States where slavery and the double standard that supported it would not exist, or, at least, not be manifested with the selfish overt blatant display of the past.

⁶⁶ Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 57.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 58-59.

Though the Constitution of the United States with its claims of inalienable rights for all humanity had no relevance for the slaves, it was the slave community who saved the Constitution and forced America to begin to execute this document with some degree of integrity and sincerity.

Additional evidence of the unselfish quality of spiritually based ethical framework of people of African descent comes from the era of The Movement. The greatest percentage of participants in The Movement was people of African descent. However, people of African descent were not the sole beneficiaries of the labors from that era. They were not laboring solely for their own good, but also for the good of others. Other oppressed groups in America benefited immensely.

The Movement was liberating to a small percentage of the dominant culture. The spiritually based ethical framework of the crusaders for justice assisted them in seeing a danger that lay ahead of White America that the dominant group could not see. Unlike the actions of a non-spiritually based ethical framework that only benefits predetermined individuals, group or race, a spiritually based effort such as The Movement benefited both supporters and opponents of the undertaking. The Movement had an inherent redemptive element that rescued White America, as much as they would allow themselves to be redeemed, from a continuous slow descent on an unethical course.

The spiritually based ethical framework of the slave community was not inundated with incongruities and contradictions, as an ethical system that is spiritually based cannot be contradictory and incongruent. It was because their ethical framework was spiritually based that the slaves were not trapped by contradictions in

their daily behavior with and toward the White slaveholding community. In all the round of slave literature readers will find no volume of narratives that highlight consistent contradictory behavior among the sons and daughters of Africa and their descendants.

The spiritually based ethical framework of the slave community had a reflective component. The reflective nature of the ethical framework brought slaves to conclusions with which their oppressor were at odds. A people who function from a spiritually based ethical framework upon engaging in serious reflection will necessarily arrive at conclusions that are the opposite of what individuals from a non-spiritually based ethical framework will arrive at.

One of the earliest conclusions drawn by slaves and incorporated into their spiritually based system of ethics to assist them in dealing with the evil institution of chattel slavery was to seek opportunities to run away, an act condemned by slave owners and advocates of slavery.

Next to resentment over punishment, the attempt to find relatives was the most prevalent cause of flight.⁶⁸ A slave running away to freedom struck the hardest blow an individual could against the regime. The profile of runaway slaves reveals that all classes abhorred the institution of slavery.⁶⁹

In slave-holding States, it was a crime, according to the non-spiritually based oppressive laws of the Colonists and later American citizens, for slaves to runaway from their owners. The statutes and laws relating to runaway slaves were concerned

⁶⁸ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 451.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 648.

more with money than with morality. Spiritual reflection brought slaves to conclusions that were at odds with the laws and statutes regarding running away.

The slaves functioned with moral and social accountability, as a spiritually based community cannot function consistently to the contrary. Though restricted by the laws of their oppressor, the slave community did not function with the same type of moral and social irresponsibility and accountability toward the slaveholding community as that community acted toward the African society. Slave narratives and literature available about the era of slavery provide no documentation of a trend of systematic destructive and mean spirited acts of slaves toward the oppressor, which resulted from moral or social irresponsibility and accountability.

According to Eugene Genovese, who dedicated a section of his classic work to investigating slave revolts, the slaves of the Old South did not take up arms often enough or in large enough numbers to forge a revolutionary tradition. Genovese research reveals that organized revolts and insurrections on a large scale by slaves in the United States were the exception, rather than the norm.⁷⁰

Even during the era of segregation one can find no documentation of where the descendants of slaves acted with no moral or social accountability toward segregationists.

During the era of The Movement, people of African heritage marched, demonstrated, and picketed as a means of drawing attention to the social irresponsibility and non-accountability with which White people had been living. Many White citizens contended that the marching and picketing was the result of

⁷⁰ Ibid., 587-598.

moral and social irresponsibility and accountability, as local laws were being violated. However, peaceful demonstration supposedly was a right, according to the law of the land. Therefore, participants in The Movement were not being morally or socially irresponsible. Moreover, it was a moral and social responsibility to confront injustice and oppression. The system of segregation was oppressive and unjust.

The third feature of the ethical framework of the slave community and people of African descent is its inherent strength.

Because the dominant group was driven by a sophisticated ethics of survival, they reasoned that this system could be pushed on the slave community in an unsophisticated crude manner as a tactic of control. The great error of the oppressor during the days of slavery was the belief that the negative survival structure set in place against people of African descent was sufficient to hold them captive. The slaves did not sink morally to the lowest level of human existence and make survival their sole goal.

The slaves recognized the demonic survival structure set in place for them by the oppressor, the potential power of that structure and its far-reaching application. The slave community began to creatively enlarge and refine their spiritually based ethical framework to assist them in transcending the brutish, animalistic, dull ethics of survival to which they were expected to succumb and be permanent victims.

The enlargement and refining of their spiritually based ethical framework served a dual purpose for the slaves. First, it allowed the slaves to live as authentically as possible within the desperate human setting from which they could

not readily escape. Second it served as a liberating instrument to assist them in transcending the survival level structure set in place for them.

The slave community did not seek to survive. People who merely wish to survive will do anything to achieve this end. They have no boundaries. Nothing is too bad to do in order to survive. People who function from a spiritually based ethical framework have boundaries and will at some point draw the line. Some things are just too bad to do, so bad that even death would be preferred to accomplishing the act.

Post Civil War descendants of the slave community continued to enlarge and refine the inherently strong spiritually based ethical framework of their fore-parents. It assisted them in coping with racism, as well as with new dehumanizing and restrictive laws, rules and customs that emerged after the close of the Civil War and spanned the period of legalized segregation, which ended in the mid 1950s.

Segregation was the second hallmark institution in America that grew out of the dominant society's non-spiritually based ethical framework and was racist at the core. Dr. Carter G. Woodson called segregation 'the sequel to slavery.'⁷¹

Compared to chattel slavery, segregation was an elaborately layered less barbaric form of racism. It was under girded by the practice of putting into effect far-reaching laws that could be reversed, reworded, amended, and tailored and then instituted as legal statutes so as to significantly affect people of African heritage in a negative manner. The model was designed and implemented so that the dominant

⁷¹ Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* Eleventh Printing (Lawrenceville, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1999), 102.

group could continue to control people of African descent and enforce their prejudices about them.

The positive eternal elements of love, justice, freedom and equality were absent from the laws and non-relational system of segregation. Most people of African descent viewed the patterns of conduct established by the dominant group during the era of segregation as unethical. Descendants of the slave community refined their inherently strong spiritually based ethical system to assist them in dealing with the unethical forms of behavior of the dominant group.

Despite how baneful segregation was to people of African descent and their status frozen, they were sustained by an incalculable inherent source of power. That incalculable source of power was the inherently superior spiritually based ethical framework that informed their decision making process inherited from their African fore-parents.

Some American scholars have acknowledged the inherent strength of the spiritually based ethical framework of African slaves and their descendants. Eugene Genovese, a Marxist historian, spent nearly eleven years engaged in a historic-economic study of American slavery. Along the way, he wondered how was it that Africans could have transcended and live through the inexpressible cruelties of the slave system? Looking at the situation from the internal evidence, as the slave community perceived slavery, Mr. Genovese concluded that the only way Africans and their descendants were able to get through slavery was by means of their religious practice. Wyatt Tee Walker notes that a Marxist historian's conclusions have considerable objectivity, since he does not have much truck with the God thing. Mr.

Genovese was so impressed by the quality and substance of slave religion that he named his monumental work after a Negro Spiritual, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*.⁷²

The non-spiritually based ethical framework that established American slavery and legalized segregation did not design and develop these institutional ways of life with the best and highest interest of Africans and people of African descent in mind.

Howard Thurman says that from the era of slavery to the present, people of African descent in America know from cruel experience that the Christian ethic has not been sufficiently effective in the life of Caucasians or the institutions this dominant group controls to compel them to treat people of African heritage as fellow human beings.⁷³

Africans and their descendants, though psychologically and socially scared and damaged, amazingly lived through slavery and segregation, during which blatant, systematic, institutionalized racism thrived. The earliest Africans in the New World and their descendants transcended their conditions, above which they never should have risen when considered from a logical, social, and historical point of view.

Wyatt Tee Walker asks: "How is it then, that this Black community has been able to resist and weather, over and over again, the continuous assault on our personhood inflicted by the systemic racism of American society?"⁷⁴

⁷² Wyatt Tee Walker, *The Soul Of Black Worship*, 2.

⁷³ Howard Thurman, *Deep River and The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death* (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1975), 52.

⁷⁴ Wyatt Tee Walker, *The Soul Of Black Worship*, 2.

The answer is simple! The earliest Africans and people of African descent in America have been sustained by an inherently strong spiritually based ethical framework that has required no manufacturing of outcomes, but only a complete reliance on the God of the universe.

The slave community and their descendants serve as living evidence of the power, breath and depth that a spiritually based ethical framework offers to a community.

Theological Foundations

One sees during the unprecedented epoch of American slavery the violation of nearly every Christian doctrine and principle recorded in the Bible.

Human beings from Africa who were created by the Great Creator were reduced to the level of sub-humans by Europeans, regarded as property, and purchased, sold, and bartered in the same manner as were farm animals. The Peculiar Institution violated the Biblical principle of the Doctrine of Man, which declared that the same great Creator created all people.

In God's sovereign nature, God had already declared Africans human. However, European slave traders and slave owners, acting without any social responsibility or moral accountability, assigned Africans a nature not given to them by their Creator.

Religious leaders, of the White South in particular, theoretically subscribed the doctrine of the Imago Dei, yet they, with rare exceptions, affirmed the inferiority of people of African descent.⁷⁵ White people outside the South also held the notion.

Many churchmen of European origin defended domestic bondage on the ground that it was the divinely designed means of introducing the African race to Christianity. According to this theology, American slavery was not merely a human contrivance, nor did it result alone from human cupidity. No matter how ruthless may have been the plunderers of the Dark Continent, God was nevertheless so over ruling events as to redeem the African race.⁷⁶

This theological position taken by Europeans denied the omnipotent nature of God. Their theology suggested that God lacked the power to introduce Africans to Christianity in a wholesome caring fashion. Due to this shortcoming on God's part, the Creator had to employ a demonic institution such as chattel slavery to introduce Africans to the Divine's redeeming love as revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. This theology was non-spiritually based and racist at the core.

That God would devise an evil as the primary means of affecting good is anti-Christian and anti-biblical. If God had to employ evil, the very thing to which God is opposed, in order to consummate the will of the divine, then God was weak and powerless, rather than omnipotent. To present God a manner that was completely out

⁷⁵ H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But*, vii.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 152.

of harmony with the nature of the Infinite says more about the people making the assertion than about God.

Insisting or alluding that domestic slavery was the divinely designed means of introducing the African race to Christianity was a means that allowed the dominant culture to enforce their biases and prejudices about Africans and function without moral responsibility or accountability under the guise of Christianity.

Eventually Christian theology in America transformed Africans from beasts to humans. However, in spite of the conversion, White people, again in the pattern of contradiction, still doomed Africans and their descendants to enslavement. They promoted racism by advancing the theory of inherent, natural White superiority over all others.⁷⁷ The Bible offers no testimony as to the inherent superiority of any race created by God.

Taking it upon themselves to reduce Africans to the level of beasts or subhuman and at a later time elevating Africans to the level of human beings, Europeans sought to usurp the sovereignty of God, which is sinful. People who seek to usurp the sovereignty of God attempt to make God submissive to them, rather than they being submissive to God, which is the divine order.

While insisting that God favored the act of slavery to introduce Africans to the gospel, at the same time the Colonists insisted and preached about an all-powerful loving God. The Colonists made God both/and. Since their non-spiritually based ethical framework was full of contradictions and incongruities, making contradictory

⁷⁷ Sidney M. Willhelm, *Who Needs the Negro* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc., 1970), 209.

assertions about God was a necessary part of the dominant culture's theology. To insist that God was all loving and caring and at the same time ordained and initiated an evil practice to introduce a community to that love is contradictory.

The non-spiritually based ethical framework of the dominant culture allowed the Bible to be employed as a tool to assist in the further development of the lucrative slave trade. The Bible, accompanied by an evangelistic thrust, began to be employed to assist in perpetuating the institution of slavery.⁷⁸

America's dominant society worked from the contradiction that the system or institution fashioned by them, slavery, could be both racist and redemptive simultaneously.

Christian principles and doctrines were randomly violated by the dominant culture during the era of slavery. Therefore, the slave trade could not have been prompted by nor under girded by any theological position rooted in the Christian scriptures. What was the under girding motivation for African slavery in the New World?

Dr. Vincent Harding asserts in his work *There Is a River* that economic gain motivated Europeans to institute the African slave trade. Dr. Harding contends that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries recently established monarchies and national states, trading companies, burgeoning commercial classes, and adventurers were drawn together. The common magnet was the search for gold and other precious goods, for the power and wealth these created, and the new trading routes to the

⁷⁸ H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But*, 152.

Orient, which led to them. With the merchant marine of Spain and Portugal taking the lead, the men and the ships that carried the banner of this new Europe blundered into the Americas while seeking the way to China. While still looking for alternative routes to the Orient, searching out trading posts on the way around the Dark Continent, they discovered Africa's gold and its people. By the close of the sixteenth century, many Europeans realized that across the Atlantic they had found a sparsely populated hemisphere to conquer, exploit, and settle. South of their so often crowded and cold lives, they had also come upon a great, warm Black continent to provide the slave workers who would create much of the wealth of the New World. That brutal connection between the vast, potentially profitable sources of captive human labor in Africa, became the critical nexus in the minds of Europe's ruling and commercial classes, as they joyfully anticipated the wealth and power these human and physical resources would bring to them. The African slave trade was born out of a combination of vision, enterprise, and avarice. When the ships started coming to Africa, they brought with them the European passion for profits, the European disease of racism, and the European fondness for power of arms.⁷⁹

As slavery continued to gain a footing in the New World, the sophisticated economic web of investments and financial increase directly and indirectly connected with the Peculiar Institution was too deep and demanding to permit the system of slavery to be abandoned.

⁷⁹ Vincent Harding, *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers 1981), 5-6.

After the Revolution, slave owners and investors as a whole opposed the abolition or the restructuring of the institution in any manner for fear of financial losses. Slavery impacted every business area in all States, regardless of whether the institution was recognized.

Joel Kovel says that when the time came to structure the new nation propertied interests reasserted themselves and further etched the slave-race complex into the national culture. By this time some regional differentiation had set in, and slavery was disappearing from the North. Northerners put up little resistance to the institutionalization of racial slavery, largely because, despite having little direct use for slaves in their own economy, they were nevertheless accumulating fortunes from the slave trade and financial investments in plantation capitalism. When the cotton gin and the dawn of the industrial age greatly magnified the profitability of the slave-centered economy, criticism died altogether, and African enslavement became a nationally accepted fact of life.⁸⁰

The North eschewed direct ownership of African bodies and moved instead into a more general and fluid kind of economic transaction. The South held on to what was in some respects capitalistic; but was fundamentally a means to a feudalistic order-held, that is, onto direct control of land and bodies of individuals, but tried to live within a larger bourgeois order.⁸¹

American slavery from its inception had no spiritually based ethical or theological underpinning. It was a system designed for economic enhancement. The

⁸⁰ Joel Kovel, *White Racism*, (New York, New York: Patheon Books, 1970), 22.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

more the designers and supporters of slavery could control and enforce their prejudices about Africans, the more they could increase their economic standing. The oppressive theology of slaver holders and supporters of the institution of slavery had no room for relational eternal concepts such as love, mercy, justice, and freedom.

After American slavery had been practiced for nearly one hundred and fifty years, the White Church began to utter opposition. Following the American Revolution, Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, and Presbyterians began to speak out against the unethical and non-biblical position of chattel slavery. Yet even those religious bodies, except in the case of the Society of Friends, fatefully undermined their witness by failing to exclude slaveholders from their respective communion. As a result of this morally compromising action, the Church contributed substantially to the failure of southern antislavery.⁸²

African slavery was the first hallmark institution produced by the non-spiritually based ethical framework of the dominant culture in America. Financial gain, which was stimulated by the love of money, the love of money being the root of all evil according to I Timothy 6:10, was the motivating factor.

The non-positive emotional component inherent in racism, as racism is non-relational, was evident during American slavery. The result of the slave trade was the disorganization of the tightly interwoven strands of religion, political structures, and social culture in West Africa. The havoc played on African shores found a continuing wave of ever-destructive force in the Colonies. Tribes broken, family units destroyed, and tongues mixed all combined to create general cultural

⁸² H. Shelton Smith, *Ibid.*, 24.

disorientation of the slaves.⁸³

Unable to escape their new surrounding, the slaves had to use their inherently strong spiritually based ethical framework to assist them in dealing with their European oppressor and transcend the survival level structure set in place to destroy them. However, the slave community first had to answer one relevant question.

Howard Thurman says that the dominance of White people over Black people in America was the type of atmosphere that characterized the life of the Jewish community in the time of Jesus. The urgent question was what must be the attitude toward Rome. Was any attitude possible that would be morally tolerable and at the same time preserve a basic self esteem- without which life could not possibly have any meaning? Rome symbolized frustration and was the great barrier to peace of mind.

This has been the position of the disinherited in all ages. What must be the attitude toward the rulers, the controllers of political, social and economic life? This was a question for the slave community. Until they had faced and settled that question, they could not inform their environment with reference to their own life, whatever may have been their preparation or pretensions.

The slaves had the option to engage in nonresistance and imitate their masters. The aim of such an attitude is to assimilate the culture and the social behavior-pattern of the dominant group. It is the profound capitulation to the powerful, because it

⁸³ H. Beecher Hicks, Jr., *Images of the Black Preacher: The Man Nobody Knows* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 1977), 26-27.

means the yielding of oneself to that which, deep within, one recognizes as being unworthy. It makes for a strategic loss of self-respect. The ultimate aim is to reduce all external signs of difference to zero, so that there shall be no ostensible cause for active violence or opposition. Under certain circumstances it may involve a repudiation of one's heritage, one's customs, and one's faith.⁸⁴

What must be the attitude toward the European rulers, the controllers of political, social and economic life in the New World? The slave community answered this fundamental far-reaching relevant question. They determined it was best to hold to their spiritually based ethical framework and harness the inherent power of that framework, knowing that a spiritually based ethical framework could withstand all the designs, no matter how cruel and barbaric, of a non-spiritually based ethical framework.

The slave community never denied that they were God's children. Slave owners tried to convince the slaves otherwise. Some White preachers told the slaves that they had no souls and could expect no afterlife.⁸⁵ However, it was their belief that they were God's children that the slaves were able to transcend the demonic situation in which they found themselves. They avoided that strategic loss of self-respect, of which Thurman speaks, by not repudiating their heritage, customs and faith.

⁸⁴ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1976), 22-23.

⁸⁵ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 207.

A person's conviction that he or she is God's child automatically tends to shift the basis of his or her relationship with all their fellow human beings. This person recognizes at once that to fear another individual, whatever may be that individual's power over him or her, is a basic denial of the integrity of his or her very life. It lifts the feared person to a place of pre-eminence that belongs to God and to God alone. The person who fears is literally delivered to destruction, rather than from destruction. To the child of God, a scale of values becomes available by which men and women are measured and their true significance determined. Even the threat of violence, with the possibility of death that it carries, is recognized for what it is—merely the threat of violence with a death potential. Such a person recognizes that death cannot possibly be the worst thing in the world. There are some things that are worst than death. To deny one's own integrity of personality in the presence of the human challenge is one of those things.⁸⁶

The slave community had to refine their African spiritually based ethical framework, not remove themselves from it or it from them, to assist with the challenges of the unique form of oppression they confronted the New World.

The slave community had one great challenge, which if addressed would strengthen and support them indefinitely. The challenge was to deal in a wholesome manner with the horrors and dehumanizing non-spiritually based ethical behavior of their oppressor without developing an equally or more oppressive degrading system that would have contributed to and accelerated their demise.

⁸⁶ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 51.

Introduced to the religion of their masters, Africans overtime came to know something of Scripture, preaching or exhortation, and become familiar with hymns expressive of the faith expounded, though not lived out by the majority of the White community. To meet the great spiritual and ethical challenge before them, African slaves maintained their spiritually based ethical framework, but began to creatively reshape the Christian message they heard from their oppressor.

The slave community's attraction to Christianity and the fusing of biblical teachings into their spiritually based ethical framework can be easily explained.

The Christian message taking root among African slaves met with minimal resistance because, as John S. Mbiti points out, Africans have a rich spiritually based ethical heritage that predates the Atlantic slave trade. They assigned several positive moral attributes to God. Africans believe that God is good, God is merciful and God is love. They have practically no direct sayings that God loves. It is rare in the daily lives of African people to hear them talking about love. People show their love more through action than in words. So, in the same way, people experience the love of God in concrete acts and blessings; and they assume that God loves them; otherwise, God would not have created them.⁸⁷ As far as is known, there are no images or physical representations of God by African peoples; this being one clear indication that they consider God to be a Spiritual Being.⁸⁸ Regarding the creation of humanity, it is generally acknowledged among Africans that God is the originator of human

⁸⁷ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York, New York: Anchor Books, 1970), 46-49.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 44.

beings; even though the exact methods of creating human beings differ according to the myths of different African peoples.⁸⁹

Wyatt Tee Walker equally establishes that the New World Africans who comprised the slave community were intensely religious.⁹⁰ He also acknowledges the unique contribution of John Mbiti's work saying that it clearly established that West Africans were devotees of monotheism as early as 500 A.D. Walker further maintains that the assertions and conclusions drawn about traditional African religion being 'animistic and polytheistic reflect the symptomatic of the naivete of Europeans and White scholars. The religion of West Africans was highly transcendental-references to the 'High God's presence.⁹¹

Within the context of the holistic theological systems of Africa, all life was manifestly religious. The events of life, birth, death, puberty, fertility, harvest, famine, marriage, and tragedy had religious rites that gave expression to that event.⁹²

As the New World Africans who comprised the slave community were intensely religious before Christianity was introduced to them formally, Walker contends, the faith message of Christianity easily took root among them. The monotheism of West African traditional religions provided fertile ground.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 120.

⁹⁰ Wyatt Tee Walker, *The Soul Of Black Worship*, 10.

⁹¹ Ibid., 50.

⁹² Ibid., 48.

Monotheism was not foreign to Africans. Europeans were naive and in error in interpreting the ceremony and dynamics of traditional African religion. They confused ancestor reverence for ancestor worship. They mistook the intermediaries of the High God for lesser gods and assumed Africans in general were polytheistic.⁹³

Eugene Genovese acknowledges that African slaves maintained a connection with their theological and spiritual roots. He confesses that it is not possible to know to what extent slaves stubbornly clung to African ideas and to what extent plantation slave conditions recreated certain patterns of thought. But, clearly, no sharp break occurred. The life of the slave community in the New World, even after conversion to Christianity, did not destroy the traditional sensibility.⁹⁴

That the slaves clung to African ideas to a considerable degree must necessarily have been the case. The non-spiritually based ethical framework of the oppressor did not welcome and embrace Africans. Engaging in the practice of assimilation would have been meaningless for Africans and the slave community, as assimilating to the patterns of the oppressor, whose community was non-inclusive regarding non-Whites, had no benefits for the slaves. The only ethical framework on which the slaves had to rely to inform their decision-making process was their African based spiritually based ethical framework which overtime was refined and enriched with Christian concepts and principles.

Slavery was no stroke of Providence by which Africans found their way to the true and living God. The Jesus-faith, new to the transplanted Africans, had fertile

⁹³ Ibid., 10-11.

⁹⁴ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 247.

ground in which to grow and develop because they possessed a religious heritage founded on the one-God principle. Christianity might not have taken hold as it did, had Africans not had a theological orientation of the High God and the concomitant world-view of nature and humanity. It was that part of the African heritage that was most difficult to destroy.

The oral tradition preserved the Africans' spirituality and nurtured their newly found Jesus-faith. Any superficial study of traditional West African religions will quickly reveal that there is no such thing as a non-religious African. The great reservoir of West African culture; art, music, dance, folk wisdom, is traditional African religion. That religion has been preserved, not in writing, but in the oral tradition, passing from one generation to another.⁹⁵

The many rich spiritual concepts and practices that were nurtured in their native land Africans in the New World combined with the Christian message they heard preach by the oppressor. The slaves incorporated the Christian message into the African framework to meet their particular needs. In spite of the twisted somewhat incoherent spiritual malaise, slaves were able to comprehend and extract in limited ways something of the European's Christianity while at the same time never losing hold of the strong spiritual heritage, which they brought to their new life situation. Under the guise of imitating what they were taught, slaves found a way to appropriate the prevailing faith and retain much of the fundamentals of their African spiritual heritage and worldview.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Wyatt Tee Walker, *The Soul Of Black Worship*, 11.

⁹⁶ H. Beecher Hicks, *Images of the Black Preacher*, 28-29.

The African slave community began refining their inherently strong spiritually rooted ethical system to the end that it would allow them to transcend, not survive, their condition in the New World and the oppressive society in which they lived.

In reshaping the Christian message they heard from Europeans to meet their specific needs, the slave community fashioned and developed a Christian based experience that had four rich qualitative elements. The elements were a type of music that had a strong theological message, a theology that kept God at the center, sermon content that was articulated by a special messenger, and Church that spoke to their condition.

Howard Thurman said that there is something very private, solitary and intimate that characterizes the religious experience. The inner quality creates the mood of solitariness but not loneliness. There is a quality present at the very core of the religious experience that pushes against any mood of self-centeredness until the very boundaries of the self are transformed into a dimension of the Other, the more than self.⁹⁷ This was the experience of the slaves.

The Spirituals was the music developed by the slaves that inspired and strengthened them. The Spirituals were an outgrowth of the spiritually based ethical framework of the slaves and the new religion they fashioned. These songs were, and remain, a part of the source of the inspiration of people of African heritage in America, transmitted to them by their foreparents.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Howard Thurman, *Deep River and The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death* (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1975), 13.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

“The slave was cut off from his religion, whatever kind it was. It is quite beside the point to say that he was given Christianity, an infinitely better religion than anything he had known before. When the master gave the slave his (the master’s) God, for a long time it meant that it was difficult to disentangle religious experience from slavery sanction,” Thurman writes. “The existence of the spirituals is in itself a monument to one of the most striking instances on record in which a people forge a weapon of offense and defense out of a psychological shackle. By some amazing but vastly creative spiritual insight the slave undertook the redemption of a religion that the master had profaned in his midst.”⁹⁹

Slaves possessed an optimism that grew out of the pessimism of life and transcended their condition. It was an optimism that used the pessimism of life as raw material out of which it created its own strength. This optimism assisted slaves in creating the Spirituals. The prophet Jeremiah asked ‘Is there a Balm in Gilead?’ Their faith in God allowed the slaves to straighten the question mark in Jeremiah’s sentence into an exclamation point: “There is a Balm in Gilead!” Here is a note of creative triumph.¹⁰⁰

Wyatt T. Walker writes: “The most crucial aspect of social change and development for the New World Africans was the resistance they demonstrated to total dehumanization. The syncretized religion that they developed was the focus of that resistance. It surfaced in the music of the antebellum slave period and was

⁹⁹ Ibid., 39-40.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 60.

carried out by the instrumentality of the oral tradition that survived the horrendous Atlantic slave trade.”¹⁰¹

When one considers the hostile environment in which the Spirituals were born and developed, it is easily understood why the primary representation of the Spirituals must be seen as the implicit tenacious insistence on the slaves' humanity. The matter of self-image is crucial to an oppressed people, individually and collectively. The deposit of the pre-literate slaves' creative energy into the development of this marvelous mine of music, more than anything else, affirmed their humanity. With their humanity intact, the slaves were better fortified to endure what they had to endure in the midst of the slave and caste system of America.¹⁰²

Another pronounced aspect of social significance of the Spirituals is the recurring theme of the hope and confidence of liberation.¹⁰³ These elements were frequently absent in songs heard by slaves in White churches. The spiritually based ethical framework of the slave community allowed them to fashion songs of endurance, liberation and hope. These songs emerged from the spiritually based ethical framework which was expanded and refashioned by the slaves to liberate and lift them above the survival level structure put in place for them by their oppressor.

Unmoved and holding extreme reservations about the Christianity professed by their oppressor, slaves had difficulty with the songs heard in the White church,

¹⁰¹ Wyatt T. Walker, *Somebody's Calling My Name* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 1979), 45.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 46.

which failed to resonate with and speak to the experience and harsh realities of Africans in the New World.

The slaves also developed a theology, which was the opposite of theology of the White Church. The myth of the happy slave was more characteristic of the nineteenth century than of the provincial years. More typical of the eighteenth century were cautious statements that the system of slavery was working fairly well or the slaves were reconciled to servitude. No one pretended that African slaves thought slavery better than freedom.¹⁰⁴

When slaves accompanied their owners to worship service on Sunday, they were relegated to the balcony and the slave owners sat in the lower level of the sanctuary. White worshippers were not disturbed by this racist contradictory behavior, as the theology fashioned by them accommodated and affirmed this type of conduct. What was being proclaimed from the pulpit in the White church to White parishioners and the practices of White people at large did not harmonize with the Africans understanding of spirituality or their meager insights regarding the Christian scriptures. The slaves spiritually based ethical framework assisted them in discerning a serious disconnect between White preaching, the daily practices of the dominant culture and the Bible. The theology slaves was at odds with the theology of the dominant culture.

White preachers told slaves that slavery was a blessing to them. The theology of the slaves was the opposite. They did not believe that the God of the universe had to employ an evil oppressive system such a chattel slavery in order to be a blessing to

¹⁰⁴ Lester B. Scherer, *Slavery And The Churches*, 56.

humanity. Their theology did not allow them to be content with slavery. When Reverend John B. Pinney recounted his impressions of the degradation he had witnessed in Africa and told the slaves how lucky they were, the slaves walked out on the Reverend.¹⁰⁵

Another factor in the White Church that failed to harmonize with the theology of the slave community and their understanding of Christianity was the ownership of slaves by White preachers. These White ministers had a credibility problem with slaves.¹⁰⁶ White ministers were not actually isolated from the circumstances of their congregations. As a result, they generally shared laypeople's ideas of what was vital and necessary. Ministers often felt the need to have slaves in their own households and sometimes found them provided by thoughtful congregations as part of the parsonage furnishings.¹⁰⁷ Throughout the nineteenth century a substantial number of the White preachers themselves owned slaves and by the account of slaves many of these preachers had no difficulty reconciling their Christianity with cruelty.¹⁰⁸ From 1846 until the Civil War, every man who achieved the rank of bishop within the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was a slaveholder. Other southern denominations had similar profiles.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 204.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹⁰⁷ Lester B. Scherer, *Slavery And The Churches*, 63-64.

¹⁰⁸ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 202.

¹⁰⁹ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided By Faith*, 36.

Many White ministers did not repudiate slavery. Instead, they engaged in such acts giving lectures on servitude. In Puritan New England, for example, Samuel Willard of South Church gave a lecture encouraging slave owners to deal humanely with their slaves.¹¹⁰

White preachers usually instructed the slaves to obey their masters. The favorite text of the White preachers was Paul's "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men...." The slaves understood the assigned political task of the White preachers, which was to keep slaves obedient, and naturally resented it.¹¹¹

The theology of the slaves was at odds with any form of religious teachings that advanced slavery or encouraged slaves to be obedient to their masters.

The slave preacher emerged and occupied a unique supportive position in the slave community. As in the African experience, slaves looked to the priest or preacher as a unifying community resource.¹¹²

The spiritually based ethical framework of the slave community assured the slave preacher it was acceptable to preach truths and doctrines that the ruling community told them not to preach. One cotton patch apostle declared that when he started preaching he could neither read nor write. His owner told him to tell the slaves that if they were obedient and did as their master told them they would all go

¹¹⁰ H. Shelton Smith, *Slavery And The Churches*, 4-5.

¹¹¹ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 208.

¹¹² H. Beecher Hicks, Jr., *Images of the Black Preacher*, 33.

to heaven. “But I knowed there’s something better for them, but daren’t tell them ‘cept on the sly. That I done lots.”¹¹³ The slave preacher was preaching for reasons other than to give his brothers and sisters strength to survive. His preaching was intended to lift them above the survival level structure put in place for them and serve as a liberating instrument.

Given the specific character of their religion, its African soul and utter, and their condition which required a plain message to the heart, slaves naturally looked to those who could understand and address themselves to their hopes and their misery.¹¹⁴

Slave preachers had to speak a language defiant enough to hold the high-spirited among their flock but could not be so inflammatory as to rouse them to battles they could not win nor so ominous as to rouse the ire of ruling powers.¹¹⁵

The ante-bellum Black preacher gave the masses of slaves a point of view that became for them a veritable Door of Hope. The important insight with which he was blessed and shared with his fellow bondsmen was that every human being was a child of God.¹¹⁶

The slave preacher spoke to the needs of constituents. Slave owners preferred that slaves sit under the preaching of White ministers. However, the slaves would find a way to hear their own preachers. Slaves preferred their own preachers of

¹¹³ Ibid., 38.

¹¹⁴ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 258.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 266.

¹¹⁶ Howard Thurman, *Deep River and the Negro*, 17.

African descent.¹¹⁷ Slaves relied on their fellow African preachers for solace and moral guidance. The slaves, guided by their preachers, resisted slavery's psychological assault in a most amazing and dignified manner. They learned to love each other and have faith in their deliverance.¹¹⁸

Slaves began forming and fashioning their own religious community and separated of their own accord from the White religious community. This separation was not based on race or color. Neither of these was an issue for the slaves. Refusing to stoop to the level of their oppressor and make color or race the issue was the most intelligent, insightful, far-reaching, fundamental act of the slave community. The slaves went straight to the heart of the heart of the issue. Spirituality, or the lack thereof among the oppressor, was the perennial problem. It was the slaves spiritually based ethical framework that informed them that the continent worshippers came from had nothing to do with where they should sit in a Sunday worship service. It was their spiritually based ethical framework that informed the slaves that anyone preaching the good news of liberation could not own slaves. The slave community began to form their own Church because too many non-spiritually based ethical practices were observed in the White church. It was conduct and not color that caused the slave community to separate and form their own Church.

The slaves developed an invisible church initially. Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker said that the monotheism of West African traditional religions provided fertile ground for the development of the "invisible church," that family of faith which had

¹¹⁷ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 260-261.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 273.

no physical structures for their services. Rather, they met in unused tobacco barns, down in the canebrake or brush arbors of the plantations, away from the surveillance and monitoring of the “big house.” The potential for the “invisible church” existed long before slave appropriated the Jesus-faith and produced Black Christianity, which is something altogether different from White Christianity.¹¹⁹

The start of the Black Church began with the invisible Church, which met secretly and had nothing to do with color. The White Church and its members who were slave owners or benefited indirectly from the institution could not address the needs of the slave community.

The enlargement of the Black Church, where people of African descent separated themselves and erected their own buildings and founded their own denominations had nothing to do with color. The issue centered on moral and ethical considerations.

The greatest evidence that the slave community were not happy with slavery was their development of their own theology, the Spirituals, a reliance on the slave preacher, and the establishment of the own spiritually based worshipping community. The spiritually based ethical framework of the slave community informed them that it was better to fashion their own community which was spiritually based and live as authentic as humanly possible in the environment in which they found themselves, rather than be swallowed up by the non-spiritually based ethical framework of their oppressor.

¹¹⁹ Wyatt Tee Walker, *Somebody's Calling My Name*, 10.

Following the Civil War, freed people of African descent remained in their own Church for the same reasons the slaves founded the African Church. Racist practices in the White Church continued. After the fall of the Confederacy, the Church was the first major southern institution to establish the color line.¹²⁰

What has assisted in keeping Black Americans alive, inwardly strengthened, and completely mentally unbroken in spite of the challenges and cruelties faced over the centuries? It has been the Black Church and the spiritually based preaching found in that institution. Spiritually based preaching is the only kind of proclamation that will encourage and inspire people whose backs are constantly against the wall. Non-spiritually based observers call it Black preaching. However, an effective proclamation of the Christian Gospel is not bound to color and the background of the proclaimer has no bearing on the richness of the message. There is no such thing as Black preaching or preaching that is linked to color. Preaching is either spiritual or non-spiritual, regardless of the heritage of the preacher. Preaching either strengthens and inspires people whose backs are against the wall or it does not. It either prompts people who oppress others to amend their ways and behavior or it does not.

Admittedly, Black preachers appeal more to Black people at large and the reason for this is not color. Black preachers have appealed to Black people in post-slavery America for the same reason they appealed to the slave community. Black preachers, like their parishioners, live with their backs against the wall and are acutely acquainted with racism. This common experience between the pew and the pulpit allow Black preachers to ascend to the pulpit and from a theological

¹²⁰ H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But*, vii-viii.

perspective address the great issues that daily affect Black Americans, racism being one of the major issues.

The Black preacher sermonizes about loving the people who keep racism in tact, forgiving them, and how, as well as why, Black parishioners should put and keep their trust in the God of the universe whose ways and purposes are beyond human understanding.

Martin Luther King, Jr.,¹²¹ James H. Cone,¹²² and a host of other scholars have pointed out that Sunday morning, 11:00 a.m., is the most segregated hour in America. Segregation is legally imposed. Separation is a choice. Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. is not segregated, but worshippers are separated by choice. Color has never been the sole issue that promoted this Sunday morning trend and it is not as debased as many people have insisted.

During the era of slavery, slaves established their own Church because of the non-spiritually based practices experienced and observed in the White Church. During the era of segregation, people of African descent displayed no overwhelming proclivity to worship at predominantly White churches because of the incongruities in daily practices of segregation, which White people designed and controlled, and Christianity.

Furthermore, White preachers as a whole never have and do not live with their backs against the wall. Therefore, their preaching necessarily lacks the spiritual

¹²¹ Clayborne Carson and Peter Holloran, eds., *A Knock At Midnight Inspiration From the Great Sermons of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York, New York: Warner Books, 1998), 29.

¹²² James H. Cone, *Risks Of Faith* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1999), xi.

depth, experience, and reflection required to meet and speak to the spiritual needs, pain and continuing story of the Black Experience in America in its fullness, and instill hope in an oppressed people.

Black people will visit a White church and remark after the worship service of the White minister:

“He can’t preach. I didn’t feel a thing while he was preaching.”

The problem was that the Black worshippers who have an experience and history of living with their backs against the wall could not get on board with the White preacher. It was not the back against the wall, spiritually based, liberating type of preaching with which Black people are acquainted and which speaks to their experience. Only the people who are familiar with the non-spiritually based ethical framework can thoroughly understand and appreciate the religion, beliefs and preaching that the framework has fashioned.

White preachers say that it is a waste of time as well as antagonistic to preach race from the pulpit. They are correct. Race should only be preached in a positive vain, affirming that God made all peoples regardless of their skin or hair texture, the shape of their eyes, or the size of their nose or lips. Indeed, Jesus does love the little children, all the children of the world, Red, Yellow, Black and White, they are precious in His sight. However, race is not the issue in America, racism is the issue, and it emerged from a non-spiritual base. Contrary to the views of White preachers, it is biblically sound to preach against racism, which is oppressive, and the racist structures that are in place. Oppression is evil and the Bible reveals a God who has

never been at peace with a society where evil has prevailed. To preach anything different is not in accord with the Holy Scriptures.

Black people today for the most part do not attend predominately White churches because of the same reasons the slave community separated from White congregations and started their own Church. Today it is not about color for people of African descent in America. The issue is the difficulty they have being part of a worshipping community whose overall practices are out of harmony with the Christian faith they proclaim.

The religious community formed and fashioned by the slaves was designed by Africans to assist them in coping with racism and transcending the survival level structure put in place for them by their oppressor. The primary reason why the slave community could not be destroyed nor broken, in spite of the evil horrors of the demonic institution was because of the spiritually based ethical framework in which the community was rooted and out which they functioned. People of African descent today continue to seek refuge in the Black Church and rely on their spiritually based ethical framework.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research Distinguished From Quantitative Research

G. E. Gorman and Peter Clayton describe qualitative research as a process of inquiry that draws data from the context in which events occur, in an attempt to describe these occurrences, as a means of determining the process in which events are embedded and the perspectives of those participating in the events, using induction to derive possible explanations based on observed phenomena.¹

The key assumption made by qualitative researchers is that the meaning of events, occurrences and interactions can be understood only through the eyes of actual participants in specific situations. The ultimate goal of qualitative research is to understand those being studied from their perspective, from their point of view.

Quantitative research is research that focuses more on numerical or statistical data. The quantitative model comes closer to the scientific approach to data collection and analysis. It falls within what can be called the positivist paradigm. Followers of

¹ G. E. Gorman and Peter Clayton, *Qualitative Research For The Informational Professional* (London, United Kingdom: Library Association Publishing, 1997), 23.

this approach view the world as a collection of observable events and facts that can be measured. The qualitative approach, in comparison, lies within the interpretivist paradigm, which focuses on social constructs that are complex and always evolving, making them less amenable to precise measurement or numerical interpretation.²

Quantitative research is concerned with frequency, while qualitative research is concerned with abstract characteristics of events. Qualitative researchers maintain that many natural properties cannot be expressed in quantitative terms. Indeed, they will lose their reality if expressed simply in terms of frequency. When qualitative researchers direct their attention to the meanings given to events by participants, they come to understand more than what a list of descriptions or a table of statistics could support. When researchers focus inquiry exclusively on a quantitative dimension, research in the social sciences is narrowed to those aspects that lend themselves to numerical expression.³

Quantitative research is interested in context, but the quantitative researcher often focuses upon only a few, selected contextual factors thought to be of importance or relevance. Sometimes these are tested in a quasi-experimental environment. At other times, participants are asked to report on the presence or absence of these factors.

Both quantitative and qualitative modes of inquiry attempt to describe occurrences. The former uses numerical representations to quantify occurrences. The

² Ibid., 23.

³ Joe L. Kincheloe, *Teachers As Researchers: Qualitative Inquiry As A Path To Empowerment* (New York, New York: The Falmer Press, 1991), 143.

latter uses words to present anecdotal descriptions. The quantitative researcher looks for patterns in events, for normative behavior and for causal relationships among variables. For such purposes numerical and statistical approaches tend to be most useful. Therefore, for the quantitative researcher a single event tends to be just one of many being measured and quantified. Conversely, for the qualitative researcher a single event may be rich data, and this richness is best teased out by the descriptive use of language.

It is the end result of processes that more often concern quantitative researchers, who hope that variable can be identified and their relationships measured. As highlighted earlier, in qualitative research the whole process is of potential interest.

Where as qualitative researchers often use the bottom-up approach known as induction when analyzing data, their quantitative counterparts usually rely on deduction. That is, they start with certain assumptions (questions, hypotheses) and then look for data to support or contradict these assumptions. The quantitative researcher is more likely to be predictive, beginning with theory and then collecting evidence; the qualitative researcher is more likely to be interpretive, tending to begin with evidence and then building theory.⁴

Putting it all together, that is, the context, the description of occurrences, understanding of the process and presentation of participant perspectives is not an easy task. Research is not merely the reporting of events. Th context, description, process and participant perspective must be analyzed in a meaning and coherent manner. In

⁴ E. Gorman and Peter Clayton, *Qualitative Research For The Informational*, 28-29.

qualitative research this is done primarily by the process of induction, using a bottom up approach after data have been collected. In quantitative research, one usually starts with certain assumptions, questions or hypotheses and looks for data that will support or deny them. By contrast, often the qualitative researcher collects evidence and uses this to develop an explanation of events, to establish a theory based on observed phenomena. This is sometimes called grounded theory, as the theory is based on the data found on the ground, or built from the ground up. The research begins by collecting, observing and studying as widely as possible, and uses this broadly based approach to data acquisition and interpretation to help understand emerging concerns and to offer specific analyses of those concerns.⁵

Distinctive Features Of Qualitative Research

One of the most important aspects of qualitative research is its concern with context. Context stripping is an unfortunate feature of science, and, as such, scientific methods, which do not consciously work to avoid this stripping, distort the reality they attempt to portray. The experiences of people are shaped in particular contexts and cannot be understood if removed from those contexts. Thus, qualitative research attempts to be as naturalistic as possible, meaning that contexts must not be constructed or modified. Research must take place in the normal, everyday context of the researched.⁶

⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁶ Joe L. Kincheloe, *Teachers As Researchers*, 144.

Qualitative research draws data from the environment or context in which events occur. Qualitative research is contextual in that it uses the natural setting in which events occur as an observation post from which data are gathered. In qualitative research, the researcher does not remain remote and detached from events but actually enters the context or situation, collecting data and enhancing these raw data collected first-hand through the insights gained from actually being on site. The aim of researchers is to identify with their subjects and experience the milieu as they experience it.⁷

Qualitative research attempts to describe occurrences. The researcher uses a variety of sources to gather information such as tape recorders, video cameras, notes taken on paper, personal records of participants, memos and dairies. The researcher, having entered the context personally, can take the information provided and add observations about physical aspects of behavior, descriptions of settings, and other characteristics of the environment.⁸

It is not so much the end result of an event that concerns qualitative researchers as the process, the entire event itself. Because of its emphasis on the context in which events occur, qualitative research is ideally placed to understand the process of events- how ideas become actions, the reactions to those actions, etc.- and the various components of the process. The qualitative researcher is able to develop a fuller and richer understanding of events through immersion in the entire activity.

⁷ E. Gorman and Peter Clayton, *Qualitative Research For The Informational*, 24.

⁸ Ibid., 25.

Putting context and process together allows one to have a grasp of the natural history of events.⁹

Qualitative researchers seek to understand what people believe, how they feel, how they interpret events; and the researchers try to record and accurately describe these beliefs, feelings and interpretations. Because qualitative researchers are determined to portray the perspectives of their participants with absolute accuracy, they often provide some opportunity for participant involvement in, or comment on, what is being recorded and said about them. In order to derive the full meaning from a context and process it is essential that the participants' perspectives be respected and reported as fully as possible. This means that the views of all participants must be included, and that the researcher be fully sensitized to the subtle nuances and often obscure meanings of participants words and actions.¹⁰

Sources Used By Researcher

When the researcher started this project, he only had data made public in the Fall of 1999 by the Department of Defense. That data revealed that a high number of Black Air Force members had experienced offensive behavior, but did not report he encounters.

This researcher used three sources to gather data. The three sources were: a questionnaire, statistics from the Department of Defense 1999 report that prompted

⁹ Ibid., 25.

¹⁰ Ibid., 25-26.

this action research project, and counseling sessions and informal conversations held with Air Force members of African descent during the past nineteen years.

The questionnaire was this researcher's primary source for securing information. A questionnaire should be used only if one has very good reasons for doing so. One of the primary reasons for using a questionnaire in action research is to find out basic information that cannot be ascertained otherwise.¹¹

This researcher determined that a questionnaire was the most appropriate instrument to use because it was the most feasible method to get such a large number of questions answered by a random sampling.

McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead assert that with questionnaires there are no correct questions, but there are appropriate questions whose answers can move things forward. Open questions, as opposed to closed questions, are best because they allow respondents to express a broader range of ideas. Closed questions may be too narrow and prescribed to provide answers that will move one's thinking forward.¹²

Empirical evidence shows that the impact of question threat is mediated by several variables, particularly question structure and question length.¹³ The questions put to Air Force personnel of African descent on the questionnaire were open questions with a choice of available answers. The questions were short and concise.

¹¹ Jean McNiff, Pamela Lomax, and Jack Whitehead, *You and Your Action Research Project* (New York, New York: Hyde Publications, 1996), 98.

¹² Ibid., 99.

¹³ Norman M. Bradburn and Seymour Sudman, *Improving Interview Method and Questionnaire Design* (San Francisco: California: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1979), 14.

If the answers available were unacceptable to a respondent, the individual was at liberty to write in an answer. Respondents had complete anonymity, which safeguarded against under reporting and alleviated any threatening concerns. None of the respondents alluded that they found any of the questions to be threatening.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

The challenge for people of African descent in America has been and continues to be to live as authentically as possible in the oppressive environment in which they have found or find themselves.

Reframing the Dialogue on Racism functions from the position that racism is real and operative, and is present in every arena of American life. The context where this researcher does ministry, the United States Air Force, is no exception.

Several research questions come to mind regarding this researcher's context. Is there a prevalence of racism in the Air Force? Do military members of African descent have an ethical framework that informs their decision making process regarding racism? Are there barriers to addressing racism in this environment? If there are barriers to addressing racism in this context, is there a ministry model that can serve as a starting point to transcend those barriers?

It is this researcher's contention that all four questions demand an affirmative response. Three data sources under gird the positive response to each question.

The first data source is a 1999 report released by the Department of Defense on the racial climate of the armed services. This Equal Opportunity Survey was the first of its kind. No survey of this magnitude and level of detail had ever been

undertaken to assess active duty service members' perceptions of fair treatment and equal opportunity. The Equal Opportunity Survey was conducted by the Defense Manpower Data Center from September 1996 through February 1997. The sixteen page survey form contained 81 questions, many with multiple parts. The survey was developed for the purpose of providing a better understanding of service members' perceptions and experiences related to fair treatment and equal opportunity. The survey asked service members about their overall racial/ethnic interactions, as well as about specific insensitive, discriminatory, harassing and even violent racial/ethnic interactions that had occurred in the 12-month period prior to filling out the survey. The survey also contained items on members' perceptions of official Equal Opportunity actions.

Compared to the other branches of the military, seventy percent of Air Force members of African heritage said they had experienced offensive encounters during their career because of their race. A large number of military members of African descent had racially bothersome encounters, but did not report them.

In the survey, service members indicated whether they experienced insensitive, harassing, or discriminatory incidents during the preceding twelve months. Members who said they had experienced at least one such incident were then asked to report on the "most bothersome" situation.

The second data source that supports the affirmative response to the research questions posed is the personal conversations and counseling sessions this chaplain has had with Air Force personnel of African descent during the past nineteen years of active duty service.

One of the earliest encounters I recall happened around my fourth year in the military. A female officer of African descent filed a grievance against her White commander. A male officer of African heritage said the young lady's case was extremely solid, but would never go through the official channels. The male officer described what would happen and how the White officer would, as a way of protecting him, likely be moved to another installation before anything really became of the encounter at the present base. The White officer was relocated to another base.

On another occasion I was out visiting the troops on the base and met up with a Chief Master Sergeant of African descent. He had been in the Air Force for nearly thirty years and had ascended to the highest level that an enlisted military member could attain. Somehow, as we were walking, the subject of sharp distinctions in the punishment meted out between personnel of African descent and White military members surfaced.

"Chaplain, I keep tellin' these young brothers they can't do what these White boys do and expect to be treated the same," the Chief Master Sergeant said. "I see the differences all the time."

The third data source that supports an affirmative reply to the research questions asked is a questionnaire constructed and administered by this researcher.

This researcher determined that it would be best to use a questionnaire to secure answers to nineteen relevant questions for Air Force personnel of African descent. Respondents were asked to select the answer in each question that best reflected their view. Respondents were at liberty to write statements if they felt that

the choice of answers provided were too narrow in scope. An opportunity was provided at the end of the questionnaire for respondents to draft comments.

The questionnaire was administered in a random sampling of military personnel of African descent at eight Air Force bases. After allowing a participant to fill out the questionnaire, this researcher dialogued with the person about the answers selected. Seminars were conducted at two of the bases. Participants filled out the questionnaire, after which they expound on their answers with the facilitator and engaged in dialogue.

All of the respondents annotated that they had a spiritual base that informed their decision making process. All were Christian, belonging to Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist and other Churches.

The military personnel who participated in this research project work in a variety of careerfields: The Chaplain Service, Supply/Logistics, Civil Engineering, Intelligence, Administration, Acquisition, Security Forces, Medical, Finance, Legal, and Information Technology. Only two individuals from the Chaplain Service participated in this research.

Respondents did not always answer every question.

QUESTIONNAIRE

RANK	LENGTH OF TIME ON ACTIVE DUTY
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9
10	10
11	11
12	12
13	13
14	14
15	15
16	16
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18	18
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23	23
24	24
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80	80
81	81
82	82
83	83
84	84
85	85
86	86
87	87
88	88
89	89
90	90
91	91
92	92
93	93
94	94
95	95
96	96
97	97
98	98
99	99
100	100

CURRENT COMMAND	AGE	RELIGION
1. 1ST LIEUTENANT	25	PROTESTANT
2. 2ND LIEUTENANT	22	CATHOLIC
3. 3RD LIEUTENANT	20	JEW
4. 4TH LIEUTENANT	18	MUSLIM
5. 5TH LIEUTENANT	16	HINDU
6. 6TH LIEUTENANT	14	BUDDHIST
7. 7TH LIEUTENANT	12	Sikh
8. 8TH LIEUTENANT	10	Other

	MALE	FEMALE
1. <i>Age</i>	1.00	1.00
2. <i>Height</i>	0.70	0.70
3. <i>Weight</i>	0.70	0.70
4. <i>Body mass index</i>	0.70	0.70
5. <i>Heart rate</i>	0.70	0.70
6. <i>Stroke volume</i>	0.70	0.70
7. <i>Cardiac output</i>	0.70	0.70
8. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
9. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
10. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
11. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
12. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
13. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
14. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
15. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
16. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
17. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
18. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
19. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
20. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
21. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
22. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
23. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
24. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
25. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
26. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
27. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
28. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
29. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
30. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
31. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
32. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
33. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
34. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
35. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
36. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
37. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
38. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
39. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
40. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
41. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
42. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
43. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
44. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
45. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
46. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
47. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
48. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
49. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
50. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
51. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
52. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
53. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
54. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
55. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
56. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
57. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
58. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
59. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
60. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
61. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
62. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
63. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
64. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
65. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
66. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
67. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
68. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
69. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
70. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
71. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
72. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
73. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
74. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
75. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
76. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
77. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
78. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
79. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
80. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
81. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
82. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
83. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
84. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
85. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
86. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
87. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
88. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
89. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
90. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.70	0.70
91. <i>Cardiac output index</i>	0.70	0.70
92. <i>Stroke volume index</i>	0.	

WERE YOU REARED IN A MILITARY FAMILY? YES NO

HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL LEVEL:

HIGH SCHOOL _____
BACHELOR DEGREE _____
ADVANCED DEGREE _____

IF A COLLEGE GRADUATE, WHICH BEST DESCRIBES THE INSTITUTION YOU ATTENDED

HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE _____
PREDOMINATELY WHITE COLLEGE _____
MILITARY ACADEMY _____

CAREERFIELD:

WORKING DEFINITION FOR RACISM IN THIS STUDY

Everyone is prejudiced, but not everyone is racist. To be prejudiced means to have opinions without knowing the facts and to hold onto those opinions without knowing the facts and to hold onto those opinions, even after contrary facts are known. To be racially prejudiced means to have distorted opinions about people of other races. Racism goes beyond prejudice. It is backed up by power. Racism is the power to enforce one's prejudices. More simply stated, racism is prejudice plus power....Racial prejudice is transformed into racism when one racial group becomes so powerful and dominant that it is able to control another group and to enforce the controlling group's biases.¹

¹ Joseph Barndt, *Dismantling Racism: The Continuing Challenge to White America* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1991), 28-29.

1. HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED RACISM IN THE AIR FORCE ENVIRONMENT?

Yes _____ No _____

2. IF YES, WHAT WAS THE FREQUENCY OF YOUR EXPERIENCE?

Daily _____ Weekly _____ Monthly _____ Quarterly _____ Annually _____

3. IF YOU EXPERIENCED RACISM AT ANY TIME IN YOUR CAREER, DID YOU REPORT THE INCIDENT?

Yes _____ No _____

(If you answered yes to question #3, go to question #4. If you answered no to question #3, go to question #5)

4. DID YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE INITIATING THE PROCESS?

Yes _____ No _____

4. IF YOU ANSWERED NO, WHAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RELUCTANCE?

I felt the military would side with the person/persons who committed the offense _____

I felt I had no chance of my grievance being heard and fairly acted upon _____

I felt if I had filed a grievance I would have experienced repercussions later _____

All of the above _____

6. DO YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS/ASSOCIATES HAVE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT RACISM IN THE MILITARY ENVIRONMENT?

Yes _____ No _____

(If you answered yes to question #6, go to question #7. If you answered no to question #6, go to question #8.)

7. IF YES, WHAT IS THE FREQUENCY OF THE DISCUSSIONS?

Daily _____ Weekly _____ Monthly _____ Quarterly _____ Annually _____

8. WHETHER YOU HAVE OR HAVE NOT EXPERIENCED RACISM IN THE MILITARY, ARE YOU AWARE OF THE AGENCY WITH WHICH YOU CAN REGISTER SUCH GRIEVANCES?

Yes _____ No _____

9. IF YES, DO YOU HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THAT AGENCY?

Yes _____ No _____

(If you answered yes to question # 9, go to question #10. If you answered no to question # 9, go to question #11.)

10. IF YES, WHICH ANSWER BEST REFLECTS YOUR VIEW/VIEWS

I know Black military members for whom the agency has worked _____

I believe the agency lives up to its charter _____

Both of the above _____

11. IF NO, WHICH ANSWER BEST REFLECTS YOUR VIEW/VIEWS

I know people who have filed complaints and unusual circumstances led them to drop their suit. _____

My superior made me feel that pursuing the matter was a poor choice. _____

Other _____

(If you checked other, please specify).

12. DO YOU KNOW ANY BLACK MILITARY MEMBERS WHO WANTED TO FILE A COMPLAINT, BUT DID NOT DUE TO CONCERNS ABOUT NEGATIVE REPERCUSSIONS?

Yes _____ No _____

13. DO YOU BELIEVE THE MILITARY ENVIRONMENT CAN FAIRLY ASSESS ITSELF?

Yes _____ No _____

14. HAVE YOU EVER PARTICIPATED IN A CLIMATE ASSESSMENT IN THE MILITARY?

Yes _____ No _____

(If you answered yes, to question # 14, go to questions #15 and #16. If you answered no to question # 14, go to question #17.)

- 15. DO YOU BELIEVE THE CLIMATE ASSESSMENT WAS DESIGNED TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF ISSUES?**

Yes _____ No _____

- 16. DO YOU BELIEVE THE CLIMATE ASSESSMENT YOU PARTICIPATED IN WAS DESIGNED AND TAILORED TO ACHIEVE A CERTAIN OUTCOME?**

Yes _____ No _____

- 17. DO YOU FEEL YOU HAVE A PERSON OR AGENCY TO WHOM YOU CAN HONESTLY REGISTER YOUR CONCERNS?**

Yes _____ No _____

- 18. IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO #17, WHO IS THAT PERSON OR AGENCY?**

- 19. IF YOU ANSWERED NO TO #17, HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THE ISSUE OF RACISM IN THE MILITARY?**

(A) DESCRIBE ANY CASE OF A BLACK MILITARY MEMBER YOU KNOW OF WHO HAS HAD A POSITIVE ENCOUNTER WITH THE AIR FORCE AGENCY THAT ADDRESSES RACISM.

(B) IF YOU COULD PASS THROUGH ME YOUR OPINION OF THE SOCIAL ACTIONS AGENCY TO THE AIR FORCE LEADERSHIP, WHAT WOULD YOU STATE IN WRITING?

(C) CONSIDERING THIS ASSESSMENT TOOL, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WANT TO STATE IN WRITING?

(D) IF YOU ANSWERED NO TO #9, RESPOND BELOW. IF YOU HAVE HAD NO INTERACTION WITH SOCIAL ACTIONS, BUT HAVE DETERMINED THAT YOU WOULD NOT EMPLOY THEIR SERVICES, WHAT HAS BROUGHT YOU TO THIS CONCLUSION?

Below are the results from the questionnaire.

Eighty-five percent of the respondents said they had experienced racism during their period of active duty service in the Air Force. Many of the participants used their spiritual base as a means of dealing with racism in the military environment. Prayer was the method often employed to deal with racism.

Regarding racist encounters and how they dealt with it from a spiritual perspective, written comments from respondents were as follows: "I pray about it..." "I spend time in prayer and spiritual reflection." "I talk to the chaplain..." "I pray to the one True God."

Seventy-three percent failed to report racist encounters. Of those who answered question number five, the reasons or barriers for failing to formally report their concerns varied. Eight percent felt that the military would side with the person or persons who committed the offense. Forty-six percent felt they had no chance of their grievance being heard and fairly acted on. Fifteen percent believed that had they filed a grievance negative repercussions in some form would have been experienced. Thirty percent of the respondents selected the answer- All of the above- in question #5.

Fifteen percent knew other military members of African descent who had filed complaints and unusual circumstances led them to drop their suit. This knowledge affected the decision of others not to report an encounter. Another fifteen percent indicated that their superior made it appear that pursuing the matter was a poor choice.

The military periodically undertakes a climate assessment in order to determine the health of the overall environment. Seventy-three percent of the respondents had participated in a climate assessment during their military career, while about a quarter had never participated in this exercise. Of the personnel who had participated, forty-six percent indicated that they were suspicious about the climate assessment. Those who had reservations about the assessment said they believed that the survey instrument employed was intentionally designed to secure certain results and was not designed to get to the bottom of issues regarding racism within the Air Force environment. This suggest that they viewed the survey instrument as a barrier to seriously addressing racism, as oppose to being an instrument designed to engage and resolve it. Forty-four percent who had participated in a climate assessment believed that the assessment was designed to get to the bottom of issues.

Of the individuals who reported racist encounters, fifty percent felt comfortable initiating the process and the other fifty- percent were uncomfortable initiating the process.

Eleven percent of the respondents said they had never experienced racism in the Air Force. Of the personnel who noted that they had never encountered racism, two in particular have been in the Air Force for twenty-four and twenty-one years respectively. The idea that individuals of African descent could be in any environment or institutionalized setting for upwards of twenty years where White people are in the majority and never experience racism is doubtful. The other personnel who noted they had not experienced racism have been in the Air Force for less than one year.

The individual who has been in the Air Force for twenty-one years and never been exposed to racism, confessed that she and her friends or associates engage in discussions about racism in the military environment. It is difficult to understand how she could be a part of frequent or infrequent discussions on racism within her context without having at least a casual first hand knowledge of it. This individual also noted that she knew of Black personnel who wanted to file a complaint, but did not do so due to concerns about negative repercussions.

Eighty-three percent of the participants annotated they engaged in discussions with fellow military members of African heritage about racism. Of that percentage, thirty-three percent engaged in such dialogues quarterly, which was the greatest frequency of these discussions.

All respondents noted they were familiar with the agency established by the Air Force to which active duty members could register formal complaints of racism. Thirty-five percent indicated that they had no confidence in this agency. The remainder expressed confidence in the agency.

Of those who expressed confidence in the agency, nearly fifty percent indicated that they had experienced racism during their military career, but did not report it. These individuals elected not to report incidents because they felt they had no chance of their grievance being heard and or fairly acted on. Yet, these same individuals expressed categorically that they have confidence in the agency to which they were cautious about registering their concerns. While they expressed confidence in the agency, their actions suggest otherwise.

Written comments in the questionnaire reveal that military personnel of African descent believe barriers exist that prevent racism from being addressed. Some of their written comments are below:

...the AF Leadership is not serious about equality, integrity or developing and maintaining a productive and efficient workforce....DOD and AF Leadership must assure programs in place have teeth, accountability, rehabilitation and discipline.

Speaking of the agency to which military personnel can report concerns and its lack of influence, others write of the agency:

...It is an arm of the Wing Commander and not a separate unbiased organization.

They should not work for the installation commander. They should work for an agency in Washington, D.C., similar to the Judge Advocate and Area Defense Counselor.

...personnel in Social Actions offices have bosses to whom they report and to whom bad news is seldom carried,...

Lack of authority to correct/remedy injustices render MEO offices totally ineffective in combating racism.

I know the system and how it works....Why go and seek help that will not be lasting. One can win the battle, but lose the war.

Another asserts that perhaps individual concerns are dealt with somewhat by the agency, but barriers exist to addressing institutionalized racism:

I believe that Air Force's Social Actions agency does its best to settle individual racial issues, but there is an institutional racism that people of color deal with on a daily basis.

Ministry Model

There is an effective, useful model of ministry that can be implemented in this context that will assist in transcending the barriers that impede racism being seriously addressed. This ministry model would have four steps.

The facilitator would first have to answer several deconstruction questions. These answers do not have to be shared publicly. Answering these questions will assist the facilitator in determining whether he or she is comfortable administering the questionnaire. The deconstruction questions are: Do I feel that my story and history are important in this environment? Am I proud of my heritage? Am I an assimilist? What is the spirituality at work in the military and how does it compare to the spirituality of the Church?

The second step would be the implementation of the questionnaire designed by this researcher, which would serve as the primary instrument for securing data. This questionnaire would serve as the primary instrument because it asks questions that the institution is unlikely to form and ask about itself in an assessment.

Questions about discrimination, which are important and address a critical ethical concern, are asked in current surveys administered by the institution. Everyone in the Air Force has encountered some form of discrimination and this data can be captured. However, not all military personnel are affected by racism. Questions about racism are relevant, but are seldom posed by the institution. This data is rarely captured.

The third step in the ministry model would be the scheduling of a series of seminars. At the initial seminar, a chaplain would administer the questionnaire. The person administering the questionnaire would be the chaplain on the base who is of African descent. This would necessarily be the case in order to secure credible data and insure quality participation. Since most military members of African descent have experienced racism in this environment, they will be distrustful of a White person administering the questionnaire. One reason for the distrust is that White people usually do not ask heart-wrenching questions about racism and work aggressively to eliminate it. In most cases, they prefer not to discuss the matter. Considering the spiritually based ethical framework which informs the decision making process of military members of African descent, they are more inclined to provide authentic answers to a chaplain of African heritage. They believe this individual is concerned about their well-being and can identify with their pain and struggle.

Prior to the second seminar, the facilitator would interpret the data. The facilitator would ask probing questions regarding answers that seem unrealistic. Two respondents stated that they have been in the Air Force over twenty years and never experienced racism. A probing question would be: Is it possible for a person of African descent to be in the military for over twenty years and never experience racism?

At the second seminar, the interpreted data would be shared with the participants, as well as allow them to share their views about the findings.

At seminar number three, the chaplain would allow the participants to dialogue more in dept, since they will have had an opportunity to reflect on the findings. If the

chaplain and participants are satisfied and feel no more gatherings are needed, seminar number three would be the final one.

The fourth step in this ministry model to assist in transcending barriers that prevent racism from being seriously addressed would be instituted after the final seminar is held. Following the final seminar, the ministry model will require the chaplain to move beyond the limits of the seminar setting and share his or her findings with the responsible base agency. Sharing this information with the responsible base agency is considered transcending a barrier. There are other barriers to addressing racism, but to cross this one is a significant feat.

This would be a significant barrier crossing because the chaplain would provide to the responsible agency credible data that is not documented in its own files or records, and is likely to be contrary to the documentation possessed by the agency. This disharmony between the two sets of data should, from an ethical perspective, cause alarm to anyone whose decision making process is informed by a spiritually based ethical framework.

The data submitted by the chaplain would not be enough by itself to advance the agency in the process of recognizing and attempting to resolve the issue of barriers that prevent racism from being addressed within the institution. Resources would have to be suggested to the base agency for personnel in that office to review and examine to assist them in understanding the dynamics at work.

This researcher would recommend the following books, as a start: Joel Kovel, *White Racism*; Joseph Barndt, *Dismantling Racism: The Continuing Challenge to White America*; Joe Feagin, Ph.D, *White Racism*; Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-*

Education of the Negro: and three books by the late Howard Thurman, *Deep River* and *The Negro Spirituals Speaks of Life and Death*; *The Luminous Darkness: A Personal Interpretation of the Anatomy of Segregation and the Ground of Hope*, and *Jesus and the Disinherited*.

The works by Kovel, Barndt and Feagin would be recommended because they provide readers with a serious view of racism from the perspective of White scholars and clergy. Thurman and Woodson were scholars of African descent and are deceased. However, their classic works show how the racist thinking and behavior of White people, the double standard especially, which is a hallmark feature of racism, impacted Americans of African heritage as well as White people. Woodson and Thurman's works remain relevant because the double standard remains with us in American society, and continues to negatively impact people of African heritage and White people.

Workers at the base equal opportunity office would be encouraged to answer several deconstruction questions such as: Do you believe racism is a White problem? How would you address racism in your office? Do you believe dismantling racism is an ongoing challenge for White America? Can equal opportunity exist in a racist environment? Their answers would not have to be divulged publicly.

Resource people such as Dr. Sam Mann and Reverend John Mandez would be recommended. Their labors with the Reframing the Dialogue on Racism is the most serious cutting-edge work taking place in the United States today, in this researcher's opinion, that addresses and seeks to dismantle racism. Other groups are touching on

the issue of race, but none are working at the level and demanding the kind of thinking from their audiences as do the facilitators of Reframing the Dialogue on Racism.

This researcher would also refer the base agency to the library at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio where they can procure a copy of each lecture given at the August 2001 Intensive Course where the theme for the week was Reframing the Dialogue on Racism. Several leading scholars and thinkers served as resource persons during that week and addressed racism in American society and the need to reframe the dialogue.

These recommended resources would prove to be invaluable.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY

There have only been two distinct features of American life to which people of African descent have been exposed on a regular and consistent basis during the country's existence. The two features are the period of slavery and the era of segregation.

Slavery and segregation were non-spiritually based racist establishments. During neither period was the development and general positive welfare of people of African descent approached from purely moral ground. The termination of slavery nor segregation was consummated on purely moral ground. The Civil War ended slavery, but the conflict was not waged initially on purely moral ground to abolish the institution. The Union entered the conflict for the express purpose of containing slavery in States where it already existed and preventing the expansion of the institution. It was not upon purely moral ground that legalized segregation ended. The decision to end segregation was a long drawn out process. After segregation was declared unconstitutional in 1954, the practice continued via custom.

White America has viewed American history from two distinct epochs. They are the Colonial Period and National existence. The range of the former period is from the first half of the seventeen century to 1776. The second period extends from 1776

to the present. Slavery corresponds from the first half of the seventeenth century to 1865. The era of segregation was from 1866 to after the middle of the twentieth century. White leaders in all areas of national life, including the military, will have to consider how people of African descent view their stages of existence in American life and what they endured during these two major periods.

There are four options available to people of African descent to confront and deal with racism. People of African descent that live and work in environments where there are barriers to racism being addressed have the same four options available to them. They can confront the evil through fear, deception, hate or love.

Fear arises out of the sense of isolation and helplessness in the face of the varied dimensions of violence to which the underprivileged are exposed. Violence is the sire of the fear of such people. It is spawned by the perpetual threat of violence everywhere. Physical violence, however, is the most obvious cause.

In a society in which certain people, by virtue of economic, social, or political power, have dead-weight advantages over others who are essentially without that kind of power, those who are thus disadvantaged know that they cannot fight back effectively, that they cannot protect themselves, and that they cannot demand protection from their persecutors. Any slight conflict, any vague whim, any alleged insult, any unrelated frustration may bring down upon the head of the defenseless the full weight of naked physical violence. Even in such a circumstance, it is not the fear of death that is most often at worse, but it is the deep humiliation arising from dying without benefit of cause or purpose.

Fear becomes the safety device with which the oppressed surround themselves

in order to give some measure of protection from complete nervous collapse.¹

Deception is perhaps the oldest of all the techniques by which the weak have protected themselves against the strong. Through all ages, the weak have survived by fooling the strong.

The question of deception is not academic, but profoundly ethical and spiritual, going to the very heart of all human relations. It raises the issue of honesty, integrity, and the consequences thereof over against duplicity and deception and the attending consequences. Does the fact that a particular course of action jeopardize an individual's life relieve the person of the necessity for following that course of action? Are there circumstances under which the ethical question is irrelevant, beside the point? If so, where does one draw the line? Is there a fine distinction between literal honesty and honesty in spirit and intent? Or is truthtelling largely a matter of timing? Are there times where to tell the truth is to be false to the truth that is in you? These questions and many related ones will not be drowned and with the disinherited have to do with the very heart of existence.

There are two particular alternatives available. The first alternative is to accept the apparent fact that, one's situation, being what it is, there is no sensible choice offered. The person is disadvantaged because he or she is not a member of the party in power, the dominant, controlling group. His or her word has no value anyway. In any contest, the person is defeated before he or she starts. The opponent

¹ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1976), 36-40.

cannot be met on equal terms, because there is no basis of equality that exists between the weak and the strong. There can be no question of honesty in dealing with each other, for there is no sense of community. Such a mood takes for granted a facile insincerity.

The penalty of deception is to become a deception, with all sense of moral discrimination vitiated.

The second alternative is a possible derivation from the first one. The underprivileged may decide to juggle the various areas of compromise, on the assumption that the moral quality of compromise operates in an ascending-descending scale. According to this position, not all issues are equal in significance nor in consequence; it may be that some compromises take on the aspect of inevitability because of circumstances over which the individual has no control.

The results of the role of negative deception into which the disinherited have cast is awful. To show them how awful it is perhaps is the greatest challenge that the religion of Jesus faces.²

The third option available to people of African heritage to deal with racism is hate. Hatred cannot be defined, according to Dr. Thurman, it can only be described.

Thurman's projection of a simple diagram of hatred, revealing the anatomy of its development, breaks down in the following manner.

Hatred often begins in a situation in which there is contact without fellowship, contact that is devoid of any of the primary overtures of warmth and fellow-feeling and genuineness. This hatred is expressed in unsympathetic understanding. An

² Ibid., 58 -69.

unsympathetic understanding tends to express itself in the exercise of ill will. Ill will, dramatized in a man or woman, becomes hatred walking on the earth.

To the disinherited, hatred may seem to serve a creative purpose. However, it destroys the core of the life of the hater. While it lasts, its effect seems positive and dynamic. But at last it turns to ash, for it guarantees a final isolation from one's fellows. It blinds the individual to all values of worth, even as they apply to him or her and to their fellows. Hatred bears deadly and bitter fruit. It is blind and nondiscriminating. Once hatred is released it cannot be confined to the offenders alone. It is difficult for hatred to be informed as to objects when it gets under way. Hatred knows nothing about extenuating circumstances. The logic of the development of hatred is death to the spirit and disintegration of ethical and moral values.

Above all hatred tends to dry up the spring of creative thought in the life of the hater, so that his or her resourcefulness becomes completely focused on the negative aspects of his environment. The urgent needs of the personality for creative expression are starved to death.³

The only viable option is love, which is the Christian response. This response is in keeping with the spiritually based ethical framework of people of African descent in America.

The fourth viable option available to people of African heritage to deal with racism is the religion of Jesus of Nazareth, which makes the love-ethic central. Jesus

³ Ibid., 74-88.

rejected hatred. To employ the love-ethic as exhibited and encouraged by Jesus is no ordinary achievement. Jesus summarized the love ethic, when saying “The greatest commandment is to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy might. The second is like unto it. ”

Once the neighbor is defined, ones moral obligation is clear. Jesus defined who a person’s neighbor was in telling the story of the Good Samaritan. In this story, Jesus depicted what happens when an individual responds to human need across the barriers of race, class, and condition. Every person is potentially every other person’s neighbor. Christians must love their neighbor directly, clearly, permitting no barriers between.

This was not an easy position for Jesus to take within his own community. That was why opposition to the teachings of Jesus increased as time passed. He had to endure the bitterness of his own people, as well as deal with the Samaritans in working out the application of his love-ethic.

Jesus also had to apply the love-ethic to the oppressor, the Romans. This was the hardest task, because to tamper with the enemy was to court disaster. To hate the enemy in any way that caused action was to invite the wrath of Rome. For Jesus to love the oppressor was to be regarded as a traitor of his own people.

To deal with Rome as a moral enemy required a spiritual recognition of the relationship with the empire. This was made even more precarious because of the development of the cult of the emperor worship. To love the Roman meant first to lift this individual out of the general classification of enemy. The Roman had to emerge as a person.

Love of the enemy means that a fundamental attack first be made on the enemy status. How can this be done? Does it mean merely ignoring the fact that individuals belong to an enemy class? For lack of a better term, an unscrambling process is required. Obviously a situation has to be set up in which it is possible for primary contacts to be multiplied. This does not mean contacts that are determined by status or by social distinctions. There are always primary contacts between the weak and the strong, the privileged and the underprivileged, but they are generally contacts within zones of agreement which leave the status of the individual intact. There is intimacy between White people and people of African descent, but it is usually between servant and served, between employer and employee. This is contact without fellowship. Once the status of each is frozen or fixed, contacts are merely truces between enemies, a kind of armistice for purpose of economic security.

Therefore, it is necessary for the privileged and the underprivileged to work on the common environment for the purpose of providing normal experiences of fellowship. This is one very important reason for the insistence that segregation was a complete ethical and moral evil. Whatever it may have done for those who dwelt on either side of the wall, one thing was certain: it poisoned all normal contacts of the people involved. The first step toward love is a common sharing of a sense of mutual worth and value. This cannot be discovered in a vacuum or in a series of artificial or hypothetical relationships. It has to be in a real situation, natural and free.

The religion of Jesus says to the disinherited, which includes people of African descent in America: Love your enemy. Take the initiative in seeking ways

by which you can have the experience of a common sharing of mutual worth and value. It may be hazardous, but one must do it.

For a person of African descent in America it means that he or she must see the individual White person in the context of a common humanity. The fact that a particular individual is White, and therefore may be regarded in some over-all sense as the racial enemy, must be faced. An opportunity must be provided, found, or created for freeing such an individual from his White necessity. From this point on, the relationship becomes like any other primary one.

Once an attack is made on the enemy status and the individual has emerged, the underprivileged person must be status free. It may be argued that the underprivileged person's sense of freedom must come first. Love is possible only between two freed spirits.⁴

The love ethic described by Dr. Thurman is the position that Air Force members of African descent, who encounter racism within their context, have to take. To take such a position is hazardous, not to take it is to live, to a degree, in a situation that is worse than death.

A model of ministry is needed to assist military members of African descent in taking such a position, hazardous it may be. The effective, useful model of ministry that can be implemented in this context is one that will assist all concerned parties in transcending the barriers that impede racism being seriously addressed within the military environment.

This ministry model would have three steps.

⁴ Ibid., 89-101.

The first step would be the implementation of the questionnaire designed by this researcher. This questionnaire would serve as the primary instrument for securing data. This questionnaire would serve as the primary instrument because it will ask questions that the institution is unlikely to form and ask about itself in an assessment.

The second step in the ministry model would be the scheduling of a series of seminars. At the initial seminar, a chaplain of African descent would administer the questionnaire. Since most military members of African descent have experienced racism within the Air Force environment, they will be distrustful of a White person administering the questionnaire, as White people usually do not ask heart wrenching questions about racism and work aggressively to eliminate it. Military members of African descent are more inclined to put their confidence in a clergy person of African heritage who they believe is concerned about their well-being and can identify with their pain and struggle.

The third step in this ministry model to assist in transcending barriers that prevent racism from being seriously addressed is for the chaplain to move in a consequential manner beyond the limits of the seminar setting. The chaplain moving in an important manner beyond the limits of the seminar setting involves sharing his or her findings with the responsible institutional agency designated to address issues of unfair treatment. Sharing this information with the responsible base agency is considered transcending a barrier. To cross this barrier is a significant feat.

This would be a significant barrier crossing because the chaplain would provide to the responsible base agency credible data that is not documented in its own

files or records, and is likely to be contrary to the documentation possessed by the agency. From an ethical perspective, this disharmony between the two sets of data should cause alarm and force high minded concerned individuals to examine the situation.

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